A quest for vengeance wouldn't be complete without a little poison. Having tired of his retainer's futile attempts at reigning in the unstoppable samurai on his trail of vengeance, the shogun himself sends Abeno Kaii, a master of poison, to join the Yagyu in their hunt for ronin Itto Ogami and his little boy Daigoro, also know as Lone Wolf and Cub. Armed with a sack full of poison and a network of streetwalking spies, Abeno creeps ever nearer to the father and son, each move bringing him one step closer to his prey. Soon Ogami and Daigoro find themselves surrounded on all sides, facing deadly secret agents, murderously seductive prostitutes, and a river of poison flowing all around them! The Eisner and Harvey Award winning series rolls ever onward.

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LONE WOLF AND CUB

KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME 20

DARK HORSE COMICS

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連れ狼

VOLUME 20

A TASTE OF POISON

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

translation
DANA LEWIS

lettering & retouch
DIGITAL CHAMELEON

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publisher
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assistant editor
JEREMY BARLOW

consulting editor
TOREN SMITH for **STUDIO PROTEUS**

book design
DARIN FABRICK

art director
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Published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc., in association
with MegaHouse and Koike Shoin Publishing Company.

Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222
www.darkhorse.com

First edition: March 2002
ISBN: 1-56971-592-0

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in Canada

Lone Wolf and Cub Vol. 20: A Taste of Poison

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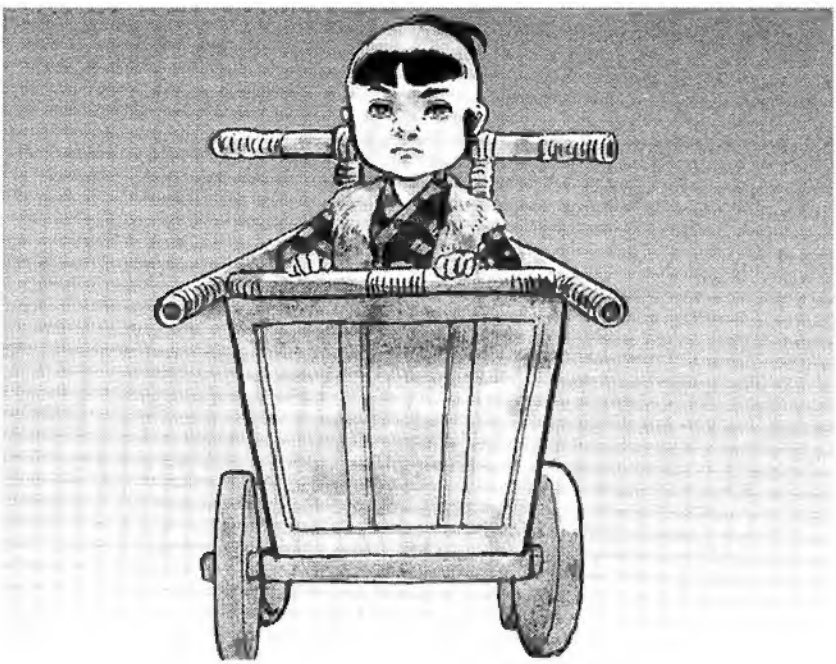
A TASTE OF POISON

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



VOLUME

20

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB

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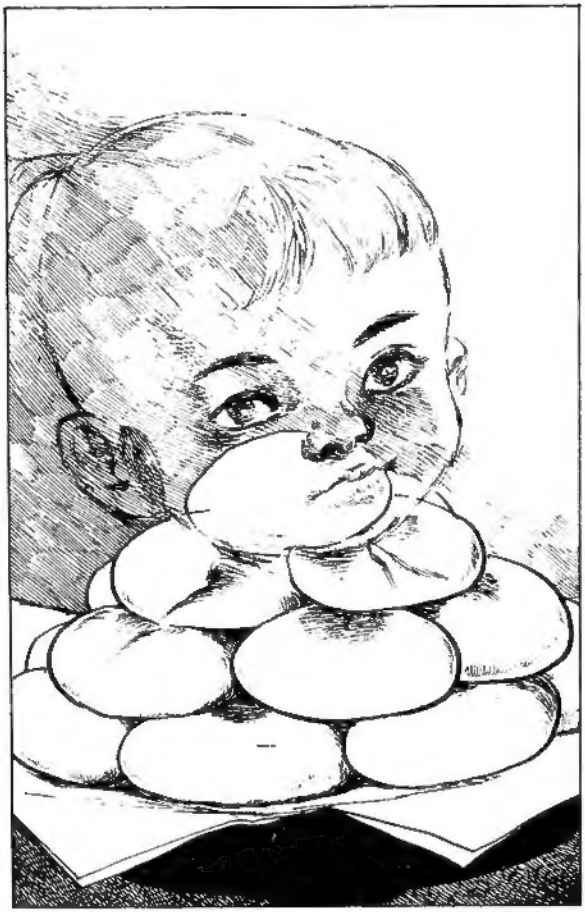
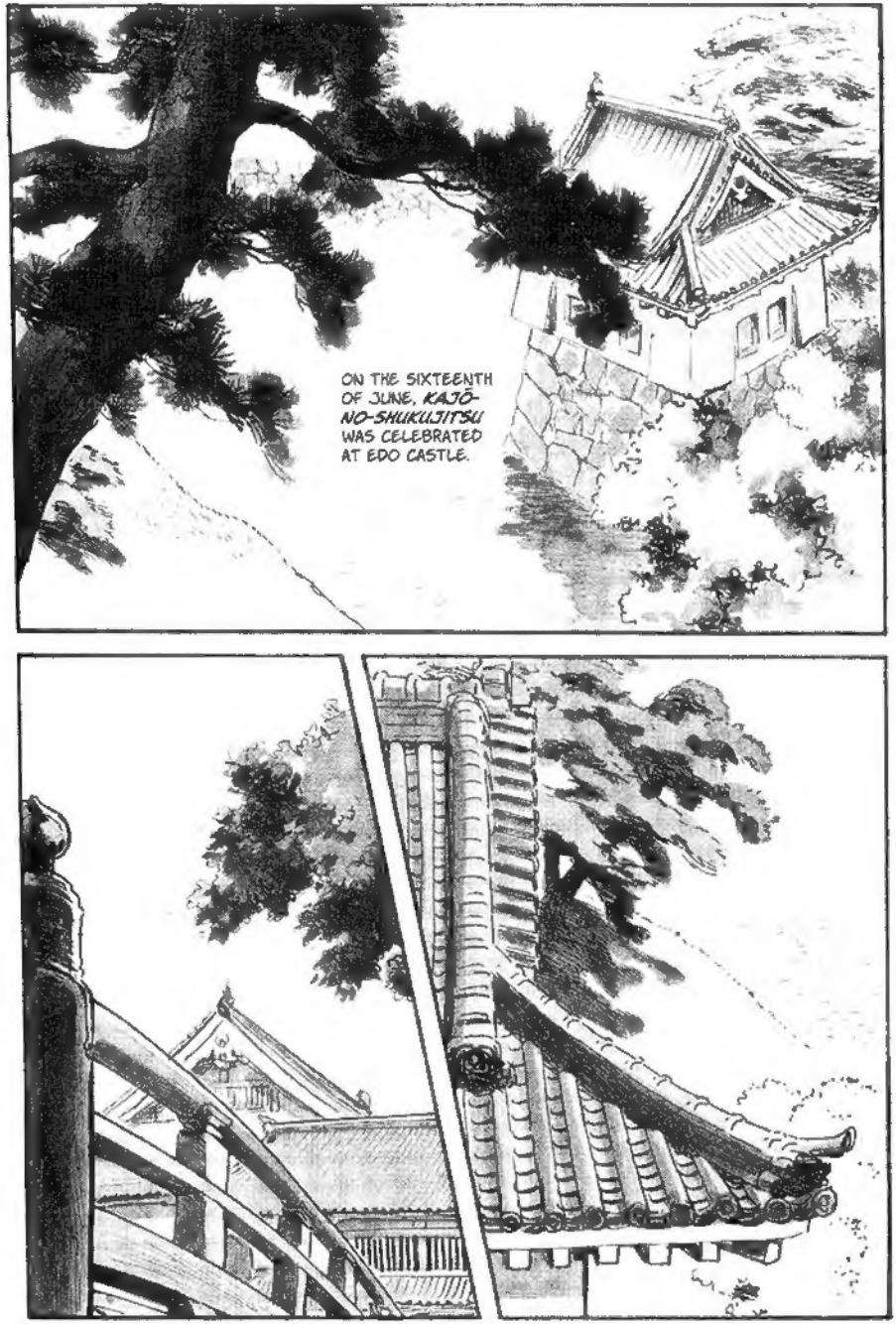
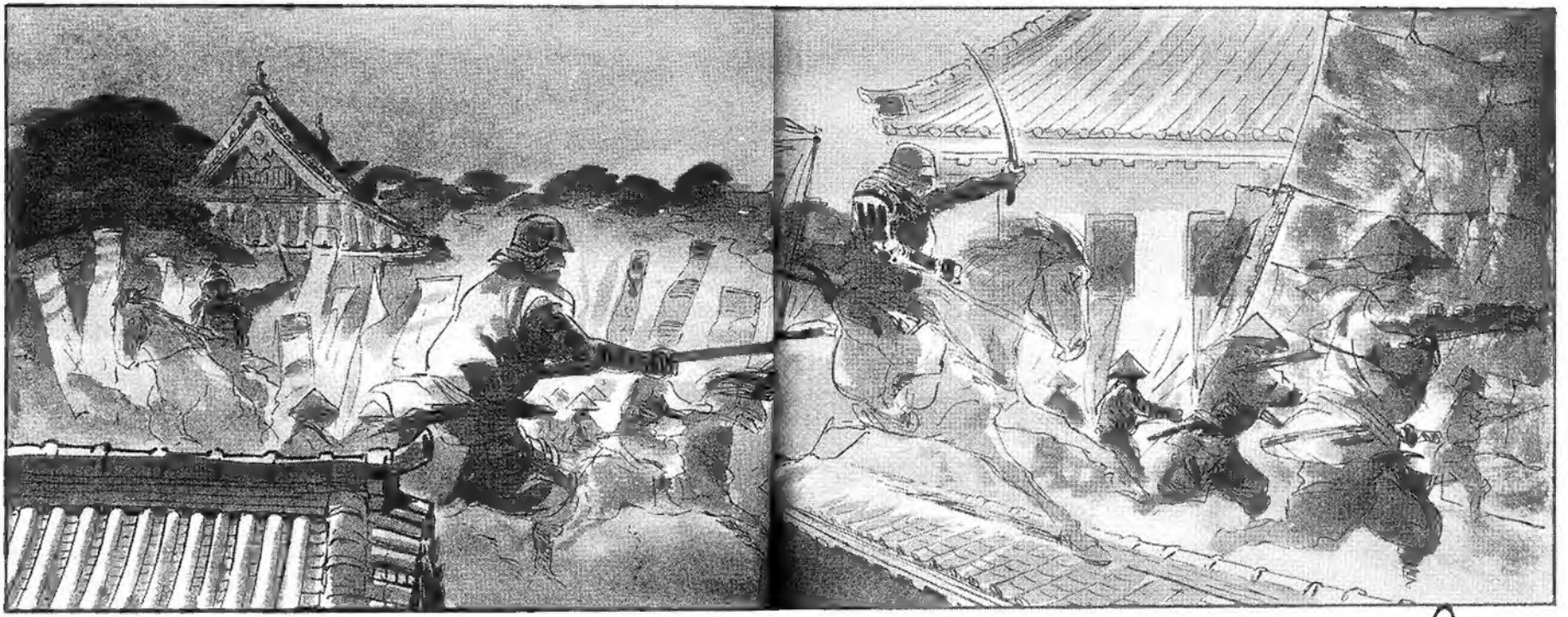


the ninety-eighth

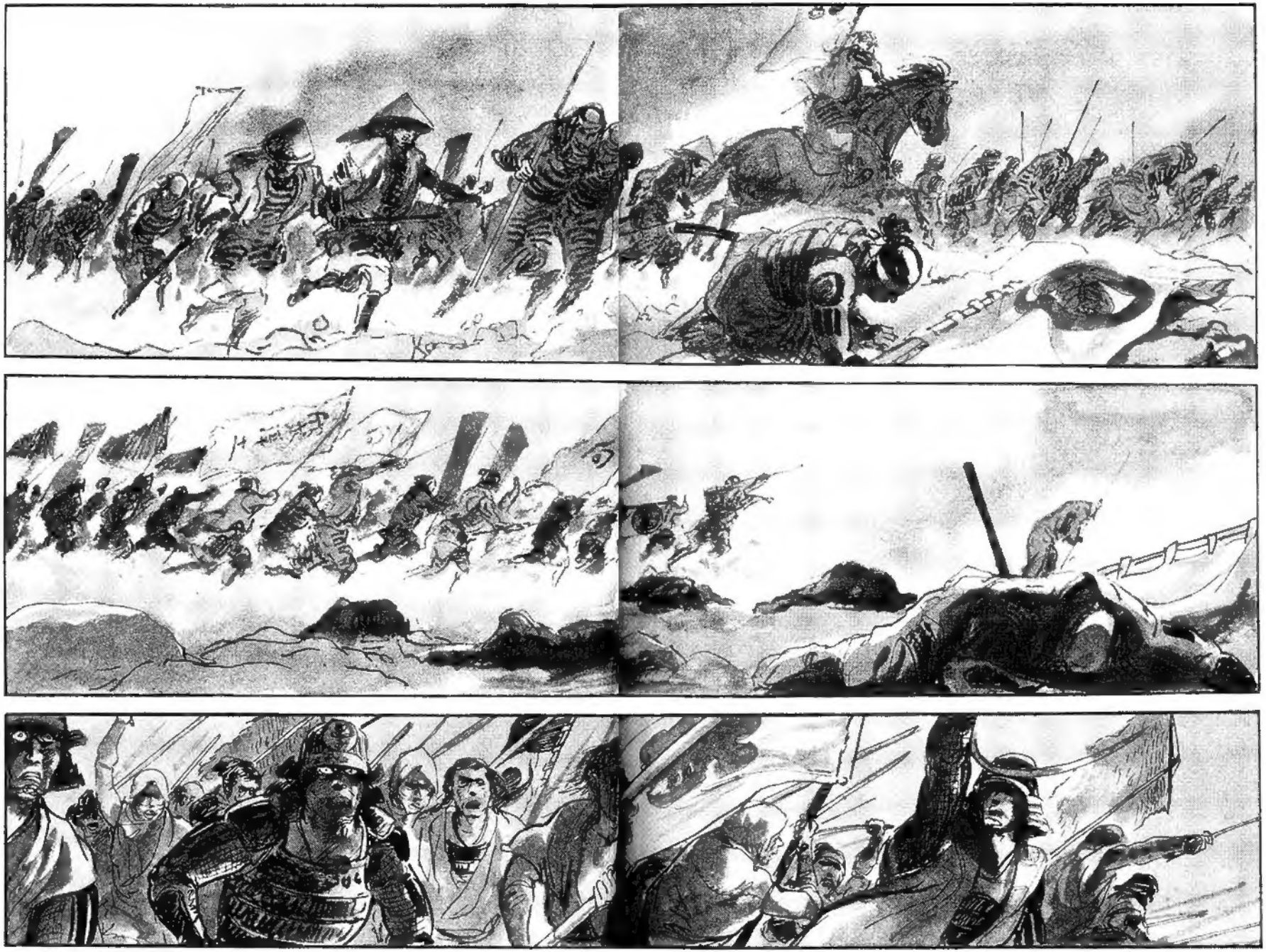
Good Fortune, Ill Fortune

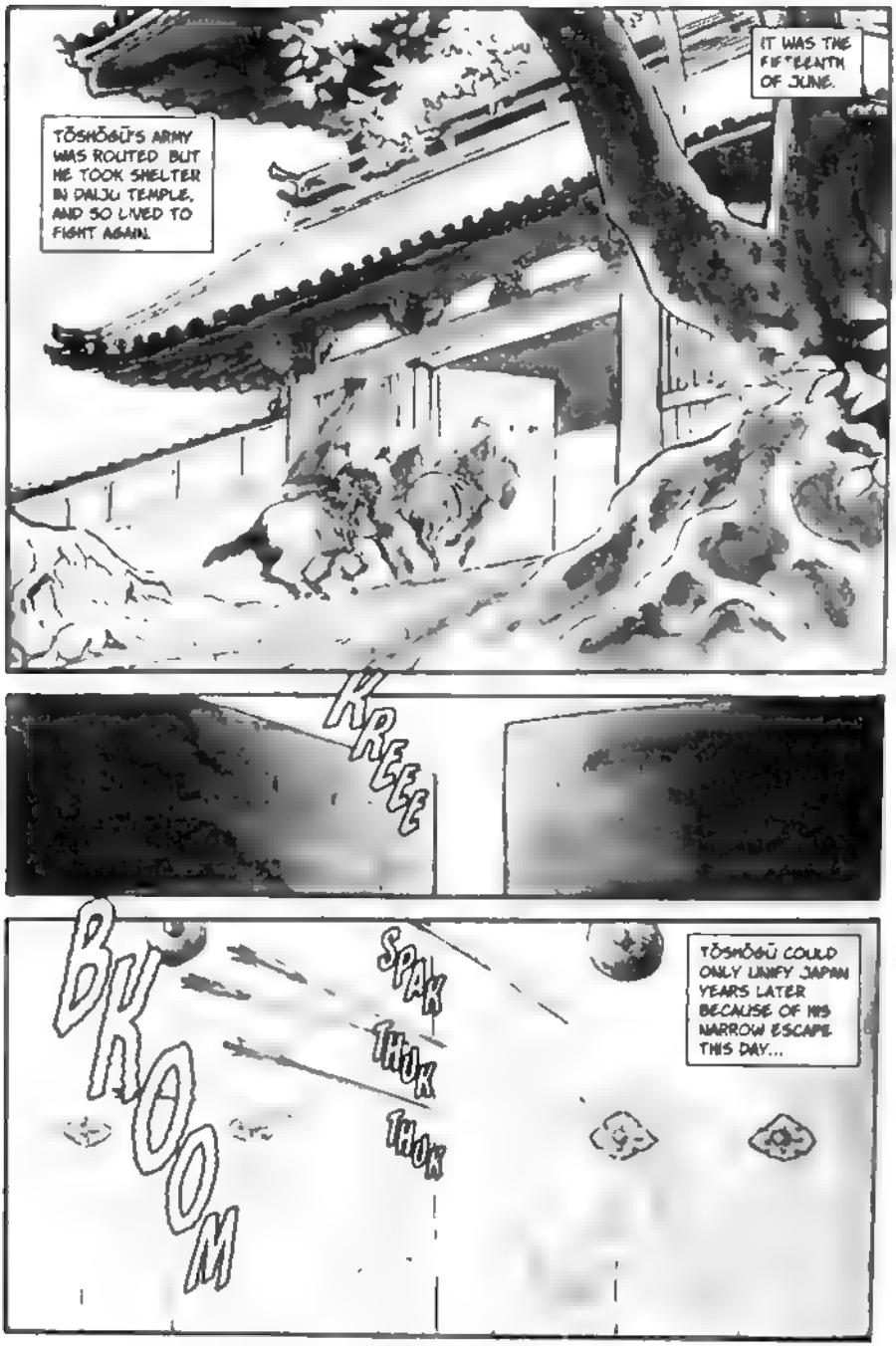

ON THE SIXTEENTH OF JUNE, KAJŌ-NO-SHUKUJITSU WAS CELEBRATED AT EDO CASTLE.

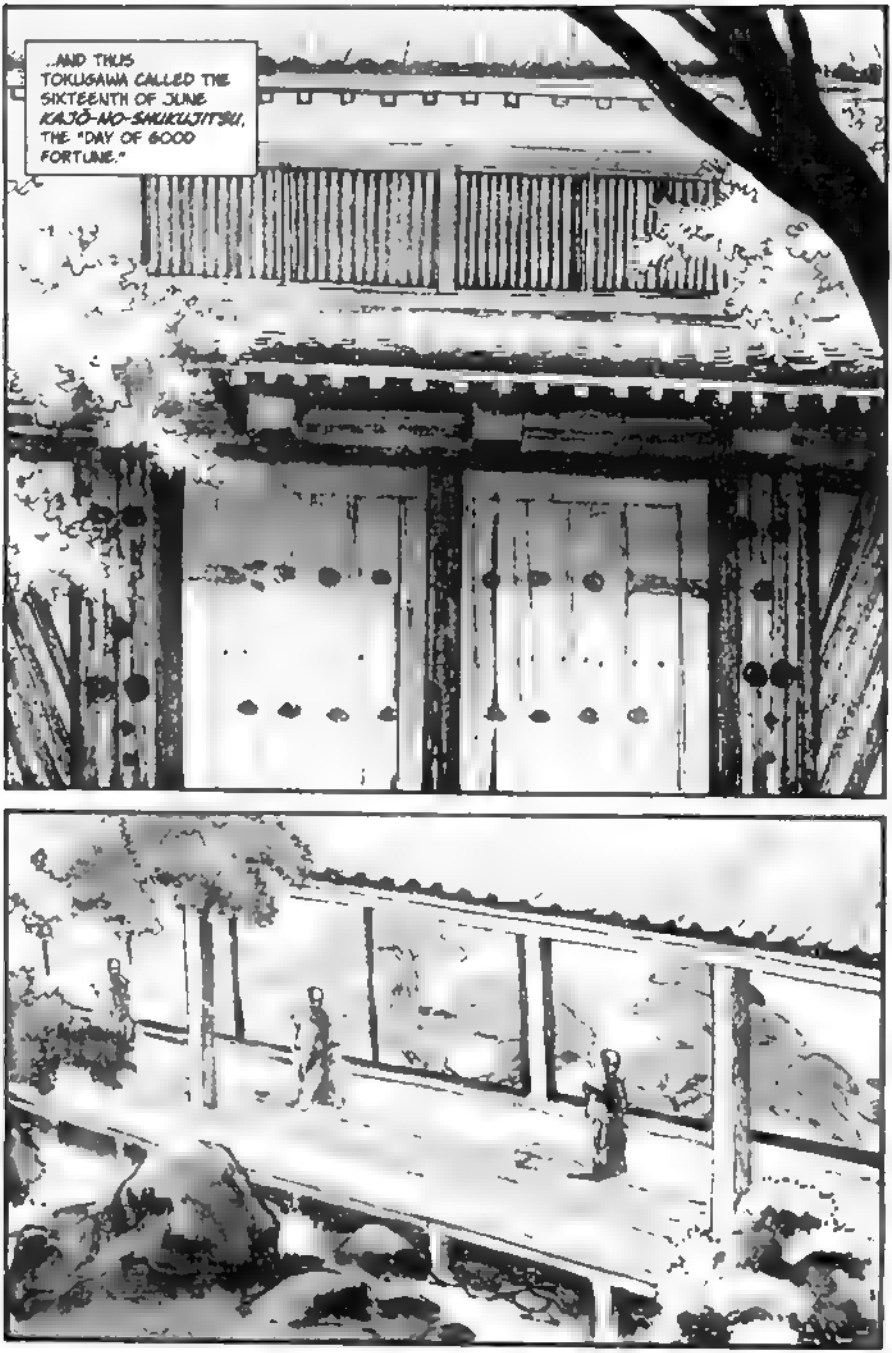


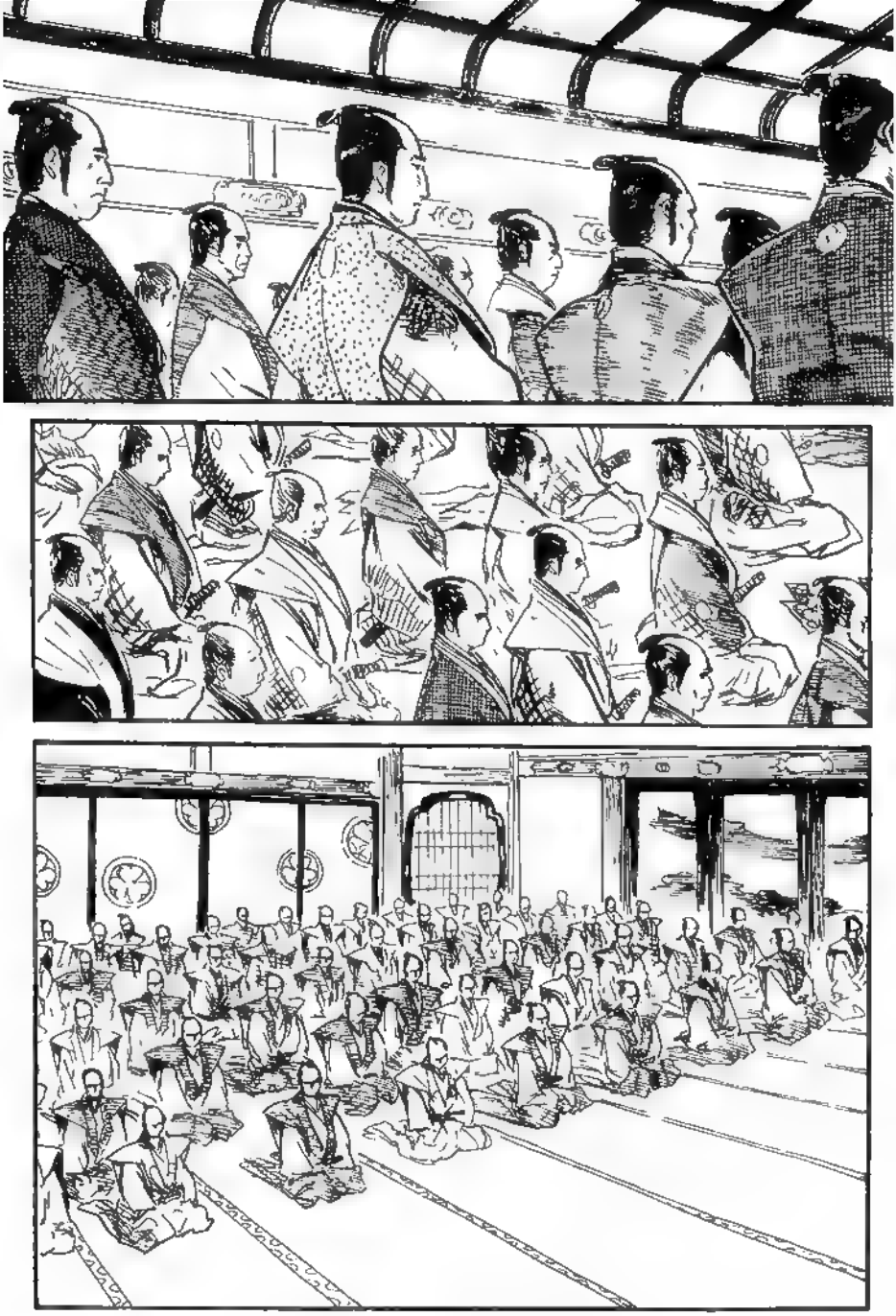
WHEN TŌSHŌGŪ WAS STILL IN MIKAWA, THERE WAS A REVOLT, AND HIS ARMY HARD PRESSED.

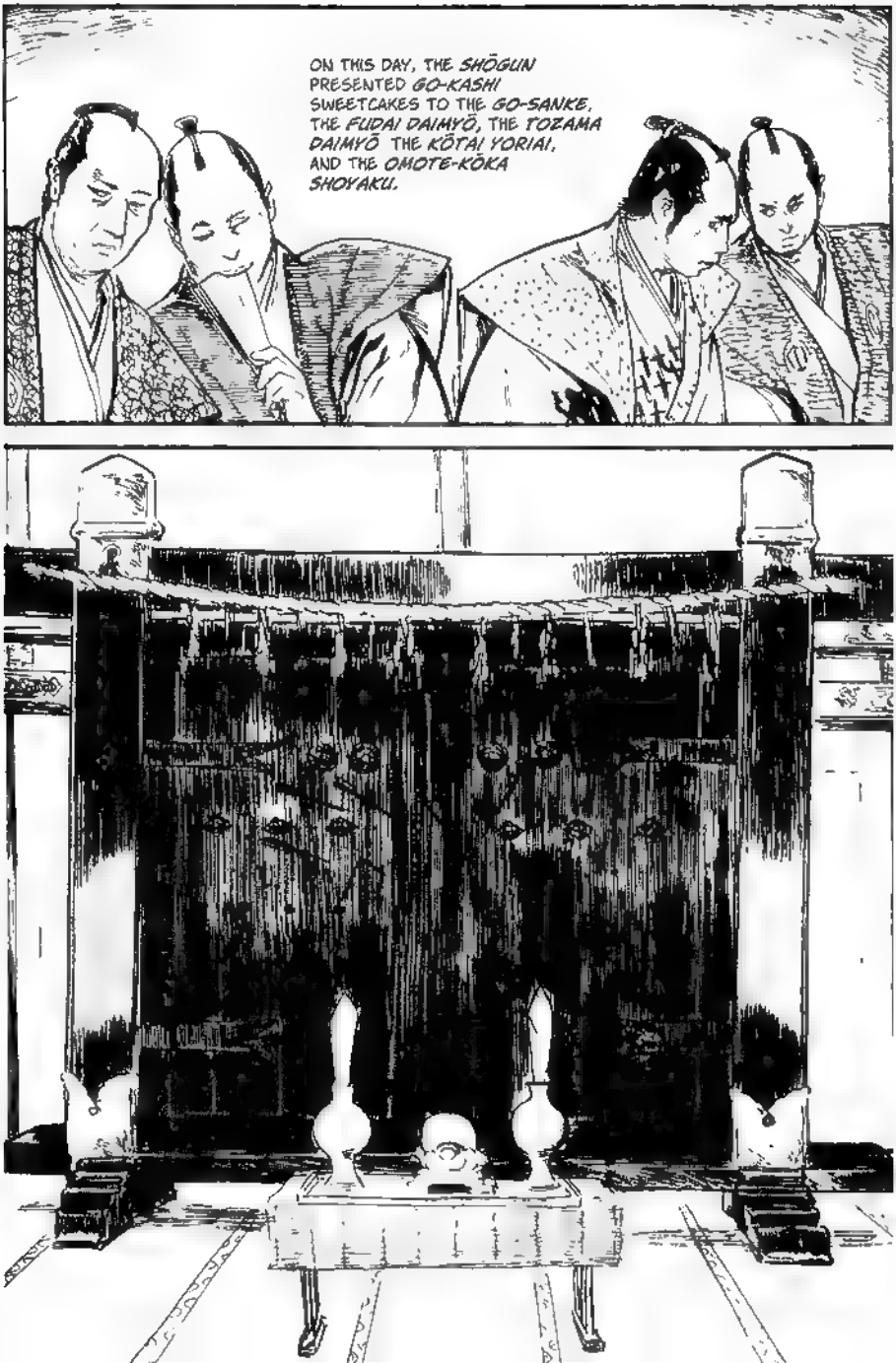
HYAHHH!
RYAHHH!
DOWN!
DOOOWN!

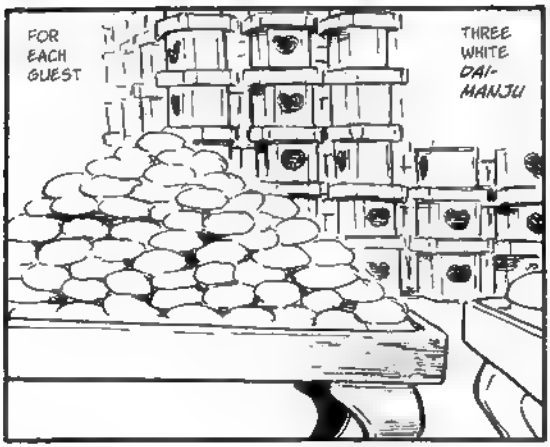


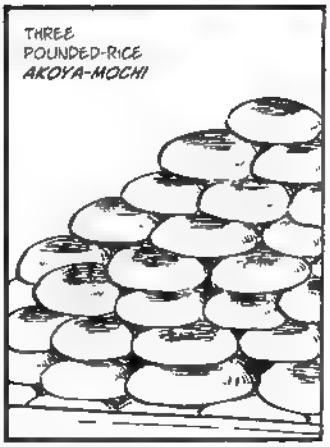

IT WAS THE FIFTEENTH OF JUNE.
TŌSHŌGŪ'S ARMY WAS ROUTED BUT HE TOOK SHELTER IN DAIJU TEMPLE, AND SO LIVED TO FIGHT AGAIN.
KREEE
BROOM
SPAK
THOK
THOK
TŌSHŌGŪ COULD ONLY UNIFY JAPAN YEARS LATER BECAUSE OF HIS NARROW ESCAPE THIS DAY...

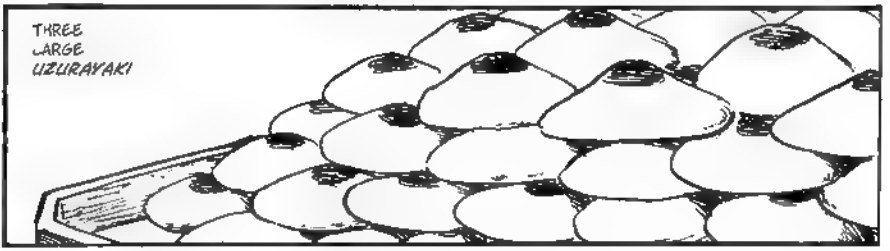

...AND THUS TOKUGAWA CALLED THE SIXTEENTH OF JUNE *KAJŌ-NO-SHUKUJITSU*, THE "DAY OF GOOD FORTUNE."

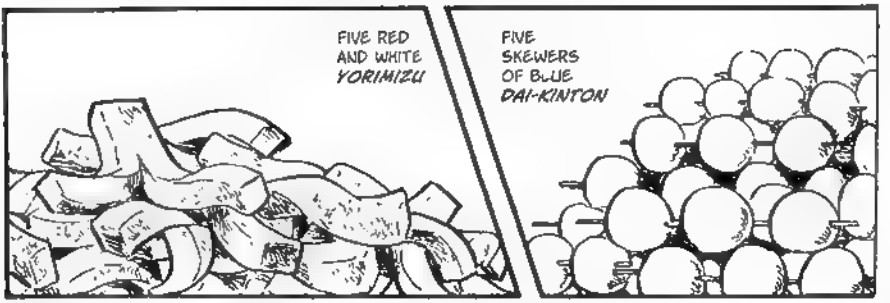


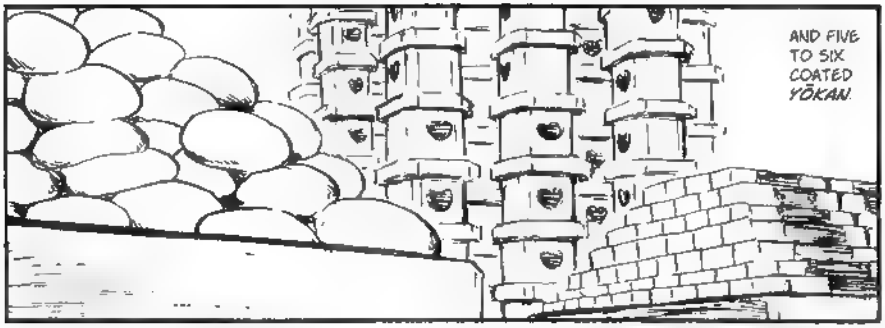

ON THIS DAY, THE SHŌGUN PRESENTED GO-KASHI SWEETCAKES TO THE GO-SANKE, THE FUDAI DAIMYŌ, THE TOZAMA DAIMYŌ THE KŌTAI YORIAI, AND THE OMOTE-KŌKA SHOYAKU.

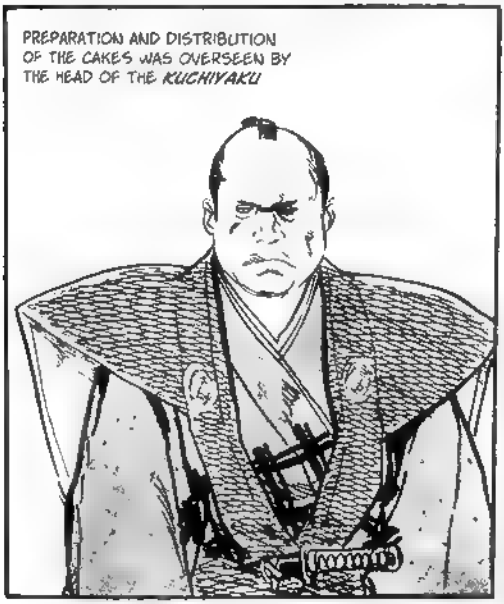

FOR
EACH
GUEST
THREE
WHITE
DAI-
MANJU

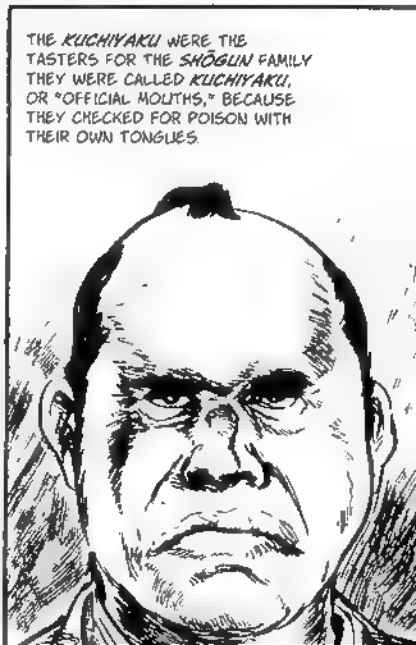

THREE
POUNDED-RICE
AKOYA-MOCHI


THREE
LARGE
UZURAYAKI


FIVE RED
AND WHITE
YORIMIZU
FIVE
SKEWERS
OF BLUE
DAI-KINTON

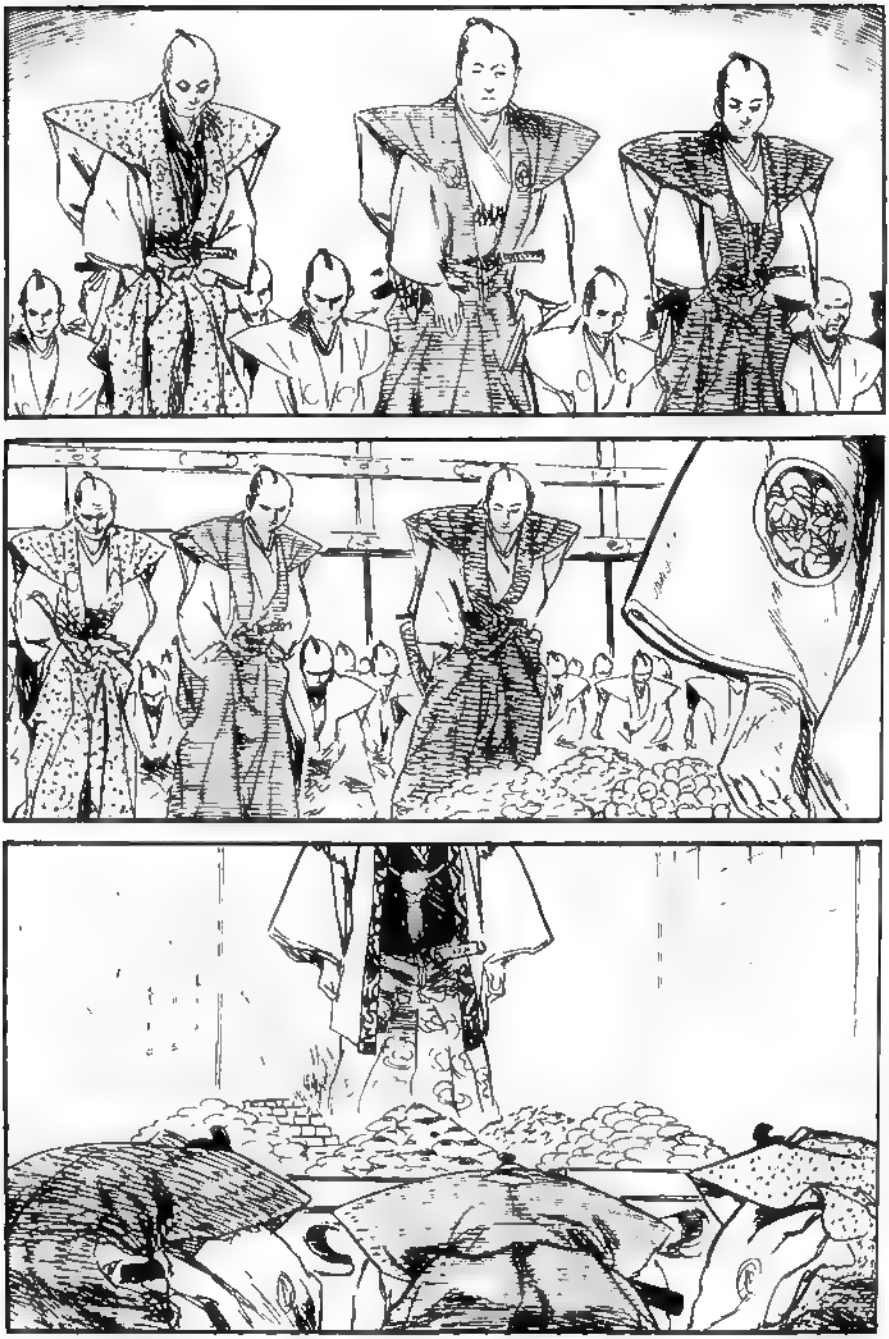

AND FIVE TO SIX COATED YŌKAN.

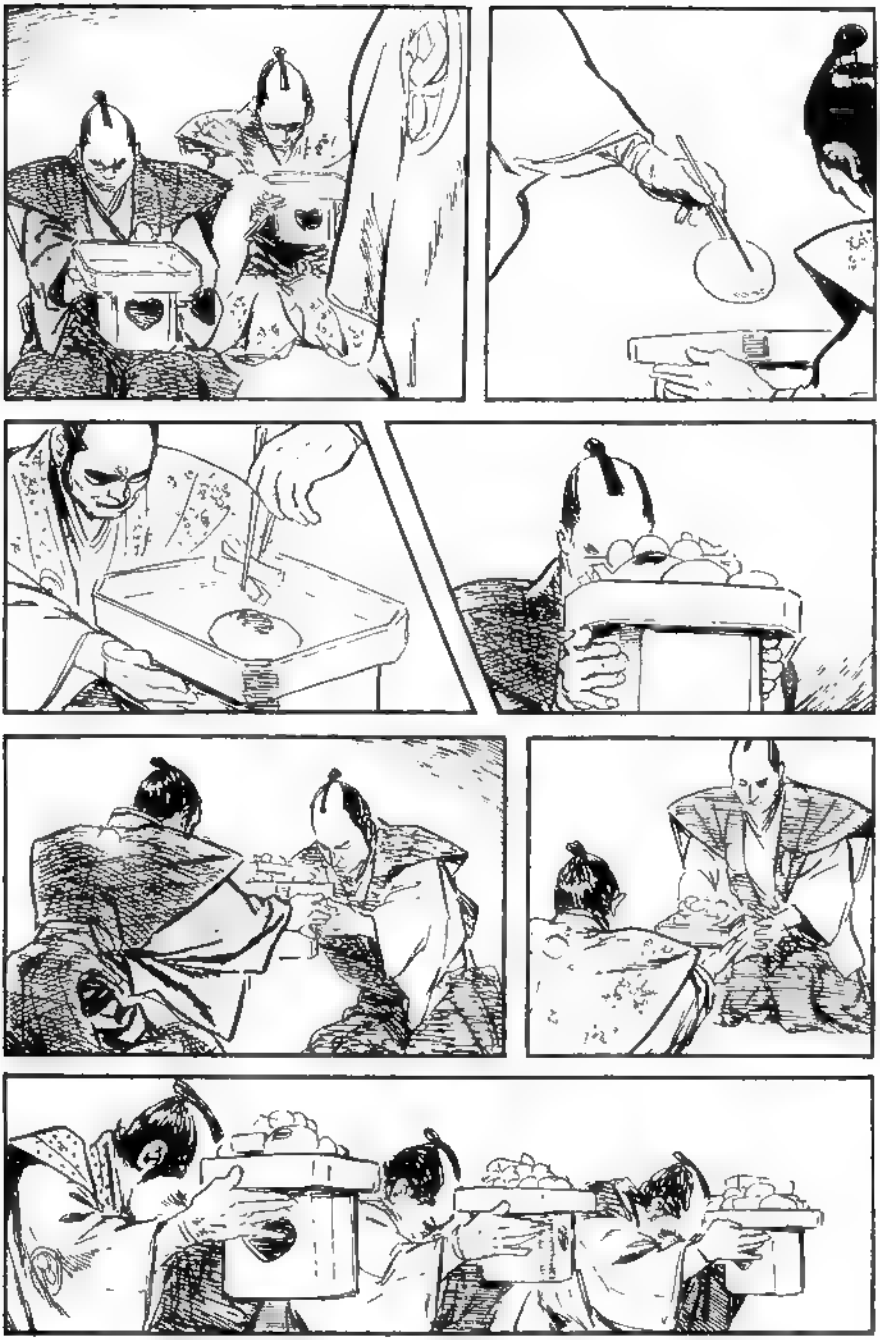

PREPARATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE CAKES WAS OVERSEEN BY THE HEAD OF THE KUCHIYAKU


THE KUCHIYAKU WERE THE TASTERS FOR THE SHŌGUN FAMILY THEY WERE CALLED KUCHIYAKU, OR "OFFICIAL MOUTHS," BECAUSE THEY CHECKED FOR POISON WITH THEIR OWN TONGUES.

OUR LORD COMETH!

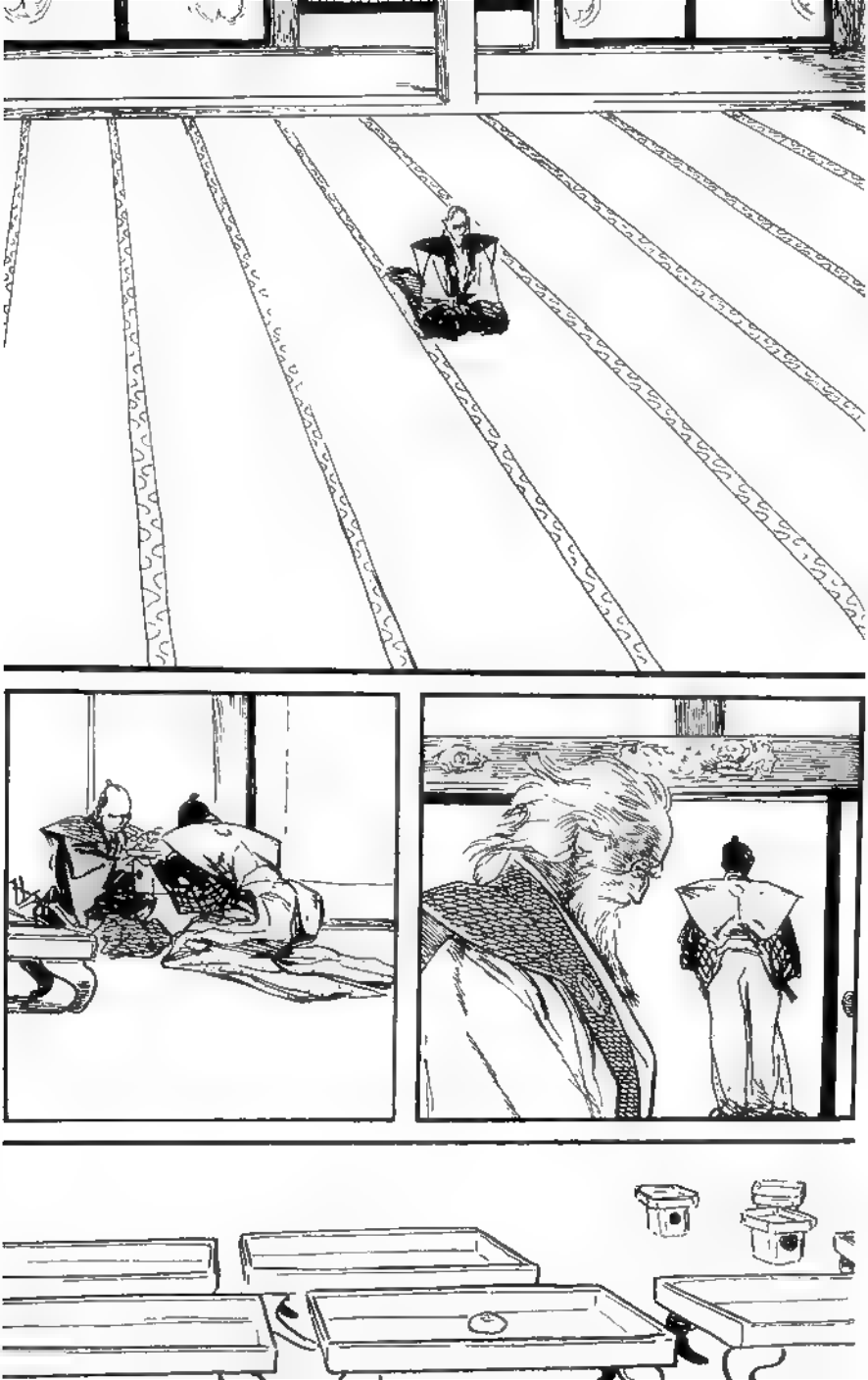
THE GO-SANKE-SAMA...!





OKUBUO KAGA-NO-KAMI-SAMA!
SAKAI SANUKI-NO-KAMI-SAMA!
ANDŌ TSUSHIMA-NO-KAMI-SAMA!
ABE SURUGA-NO-KAMI-SAMA!

Ī SHŌSHŌ-SAMA!
HOTTA BIZEN-NO-KAMI-SAMA!
MATSUDAIRA KAI-NO-KAMI-SAMA!
INABA SADO-NO-KAMI-SAMA!
MAKINO TŌTŌMI-NO-KAMI-SAMA!



MY...
MY LORD!
PLEASE
WAIT!
YAGYŪ
RETSUDŌ
HAS NO
GO-KASHI
SHIIING
SHIIING

WHAMM
SPRAKK

FOOL!
YOU BRING
YOUR BAD LUCK TO
MY KAJŌ FESTIVAL
AND YOU THINK
YOU DESERVE
MY CAKES?!
MY
LORD!!
JIJI!
YOU'RE
A BROKEN-
BACKED NAG!
I PITY
YOU!
I LOAN
YOU ABE-
NO-KA!!
THE WOLF'S
HEAD! IN
TEN DAYS!

YAGYŪ-SAMA.
ABE TANOSHI SHALL HELP IN ANY WAY HE CAN
MY THANKS
IT'S SMALL WONDER OUR LORD IS ANGRY FIRST ŌGAMI ITTŌ DESTROYS HIS FIREWATCHERS THEN HE BUTCHERS MUKA. SHŌGEN AND HIS CREW.
AND SAILS TO EDO ON OUR LORD'S OWN SHIP!
MM.

YAGYŪ-SAMA... YOU'VE LOST FACE THE DAIMYŌ AND JIKISAN HATAMOTO PLOT AGAINST YOU.
ONLY FEAR OF YOUR REMAINING POWER RESTRAINS THEM.
MMM. . . . .
AND YOUR POWER, YAGYŪ-SAMA DERIVES FROM OUR LORD'S DEEP TRUST HE LETS YOU OFF EASILY
WHERE ANY OTHER MAN. . . . .
YOU ENJOY HIS TRUST AS WELL.
MY POISON TASTERS VET ALL OUR LORD EATS.
OF COURSE I DO!

I HEAR RUMORS YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT
OH, WITH WOMEN, I SUPPOSE? LOOK AT ME! A FACE SO UGLY THEY ONCE CALLED ME KAI! THE FREAK! IT'S NOT EASY TO FIND WILLING WOMEN.
BUT I ENJOY THE FLESH AS MUCH AS ANY MAN AND MAYBE MORE AND SO, PEOPLE TALK THAT I FORCE WOMEN TO OBEY HAH! RUMORS
BUT TO THE POINT! YAGYŪ-SAMA, WHEN THE BAKKAKU RE-CONVENES, YOU MAY BE INVESTIGATED
THUS OUR LORD SAYS TEN DAYS
HRM.
SO. WHAT WILL YOU DO?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?! I WILL CRUSH HIM!
HE'S LIKE A RAT IN A TRAP HERE IN EDO! WE'LL GET HIM AT LAST!

AND PLAY INTO HIS HANDS...?
WHAT?!
EDO'S RIGHT UNDER THE SHŌGUN'S NOSE! ITTŌ WOULD LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO FIGHT YOU HERE.
ALREADY YOU'RE CRITICIZED FOR LETTING HIM ARRIVE ON OUR LORD'S WARSHIP— ANOTHER SUCH DISASTER AND YOU'RE FINISHED!
MMM. I
THAT'S WHY ITTŌ CAME HERE! HE WANTS THE ATTENTION OF THE NATION, TO GET YOUR CLAN DISBANDED! IF YOU FAIL TO KILL HIM NOW...
YES. THE NAME OF MY CLAN...

AND ŌGAMI MUST HAVE PLANS, AS WELL.
WHAT'S BECOME OF ALL THE GOLD HE EARNED? NOBODY KNOWS
HRRM.
SO YOU MUST BE CAREFUL
I SEE WHY OUR LORD TRUSTS YOU, ABE-NO-KAII.
YOU'RE A CUNNING MAN.
NOW—DON'T YOU FIND IT STRANGE? A WANTED CRIMINAL DEFEATS EVERYONE THE DAIKANSHO AND THE YAGYŪ SEND AGAINST HIM, AND WALKS INTO EDO UNSCATHED. PEOPLE THINK ITTŌ HAS THE LUCK OF THE DEVIL. BUT OBJECTIVELY, CAN MERE LUCK EXPLAIN IT?

OR EVEN STRENGTH...?
BOTH, I DARE SAY
WRONG! NO ONE IS THAT LUCKY!
NO SINGLE MAN DEFEATS AN ARMY!
THEN, WHAT?
HIS BOY.. DAIGORO!
SHIDŌ CONDEMNS KILLING WOMEN AND CHILDREN.
AND SAMURAI CAN'T KILL A CHILD! SHAME BLUNTS THEIR SWORDS. IT'S OBVIOUS THEY'RE STUMBLING OVER THE BOY
YOUR MEN, THE DAIKANSHO'S MEN. ALL TRUE BUSHI IT'S DAIGORO'S POWER THAT KEEPS ŌGAMI ITTŌ ALIVE!

ME.
I'D TARGET THE *BOY* FIRST, *THEN* ITTŌ.
NO DOUBT YOU'VE TRIED TO TAKE THEM ONLY BY FORCE OF ARMS.
BUT WAR ISN'T JUST POWER. IT'S *CHANCE*
SO EASY TO POISON A CHILD.

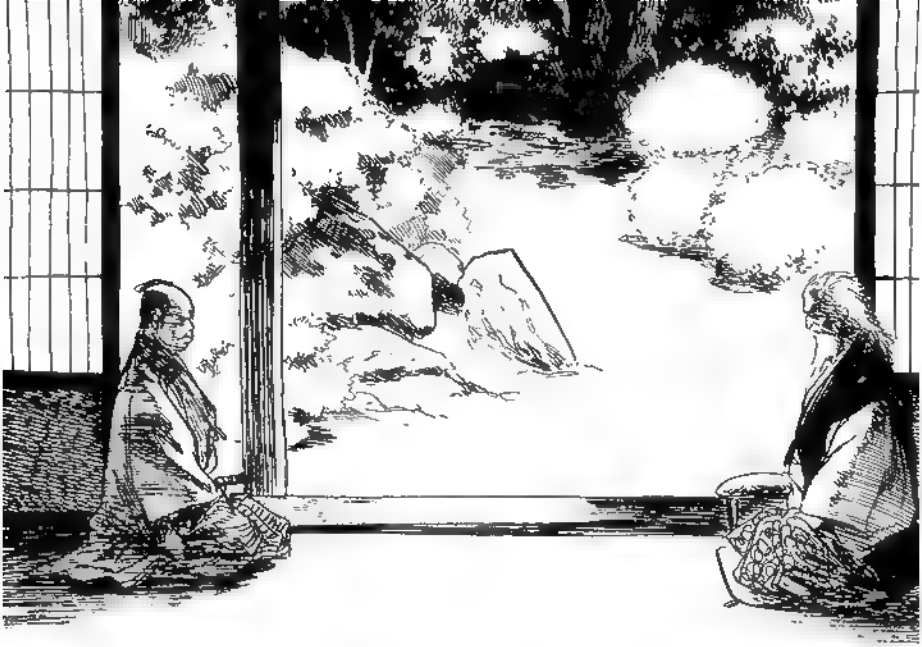
ABE TANOSHI IS THE MASTER *POISONER* OF OUR AGE! HOW ELSE CAN I BE OUR LORD'S TASTER..?
HOH..!
NOW I SEE!
HEH HEH. LEAVE IT TO *ME*. ITTŌ'S CORPSE WILL BE ROTTING UNDER THE STARS, WITH NONE THE *WISER*
BWAH HEH HEH HEH!

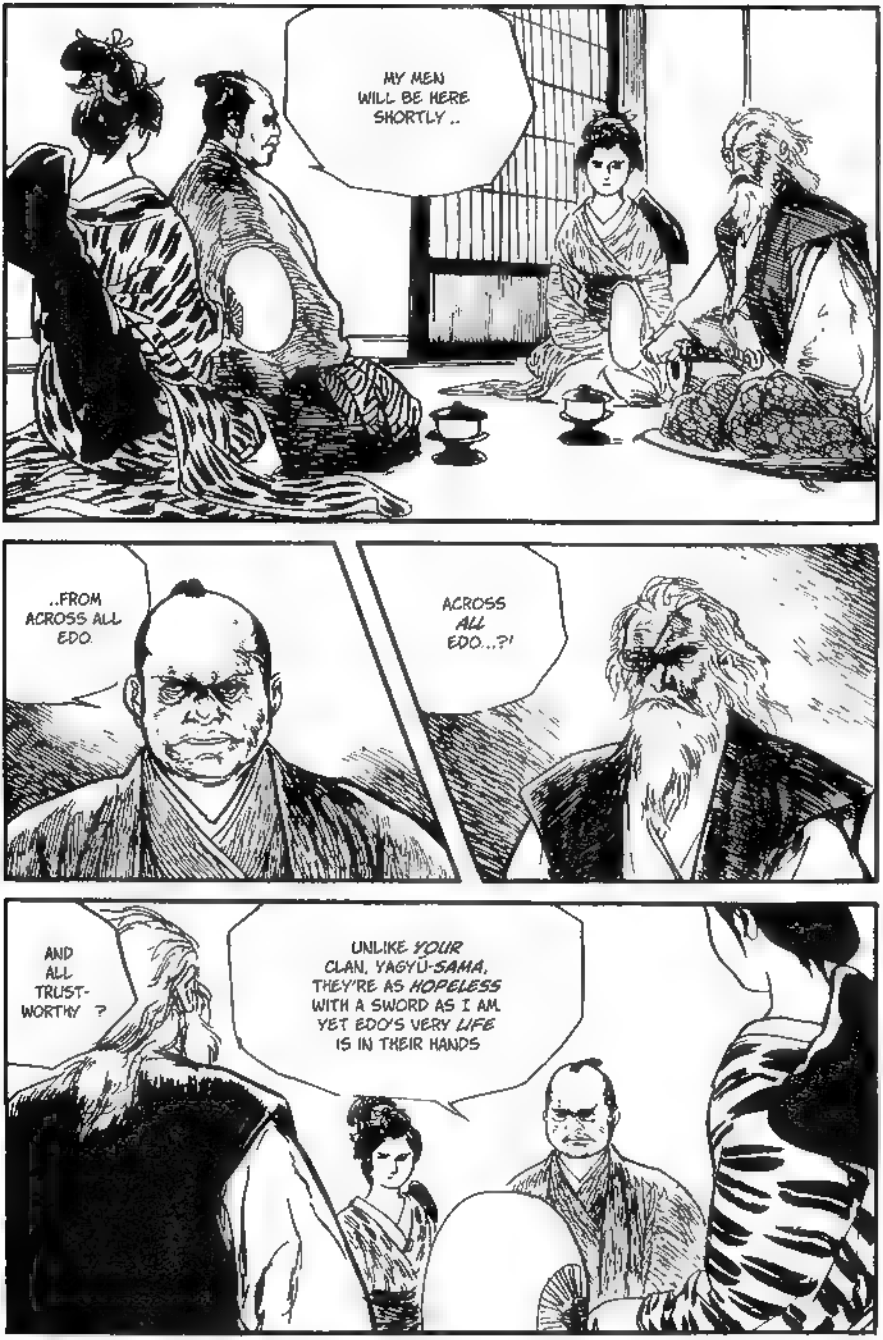
HEH HEH HEH
. . . .
THEN. .
I ASK YOUR
HELP I'LL HAVE
THE *MACHI-BUGYŌ*
TRACK HIM
DOWN.
HEH HEH..
DON'T
BOTHER.
I CAN
FIND HIM
MYSELF
AND
BESIDES..
IT'S
THREE DAYS
SINCE ITŌ ENTERED
EDO, JUDGING
FROM WHEN THEY
FOUND THE
CREW.
AND
ONLY *NOW*
RETSUDŌ-*SAMA*
ASKS THE
MACHI-BUGYŌ
TO FIND
HIM .?

A LITTLE SLOW, ARE WE? OR DID YOU MEAN TO SAY THEY'VE BEEN SEARCHING HIGH AND LOW .. WITHOUT RESULT?
HRM!
SO! NOT EVEN THE FULL MIGHT AND RESOURCES OF THE YAGYU CLAN CAN FIND HIM.
FRANKLY . THIS IS SO.
HIS FEINT COST US TWO DAYS. I'D SENT MY MEN TO FORTIFY KAWASAKI AND FUNABASHI.
BUT THEY RETURNED LAST NIGHT, AND NOW THE HUNT IS ON.
WE'LL HAVE HIM SOON.
WILL YOU REALLY?

LAST TIME THIS MAN ESCAPED YOU AND HIJACKED A WARSHIP!
THEN YOU HAVE A BETTER IDEA?!
I DO. CURIOUS. ?
OF COURSE!
THEN COME TO MY COMPOUND.
IN FRIENDSHIP

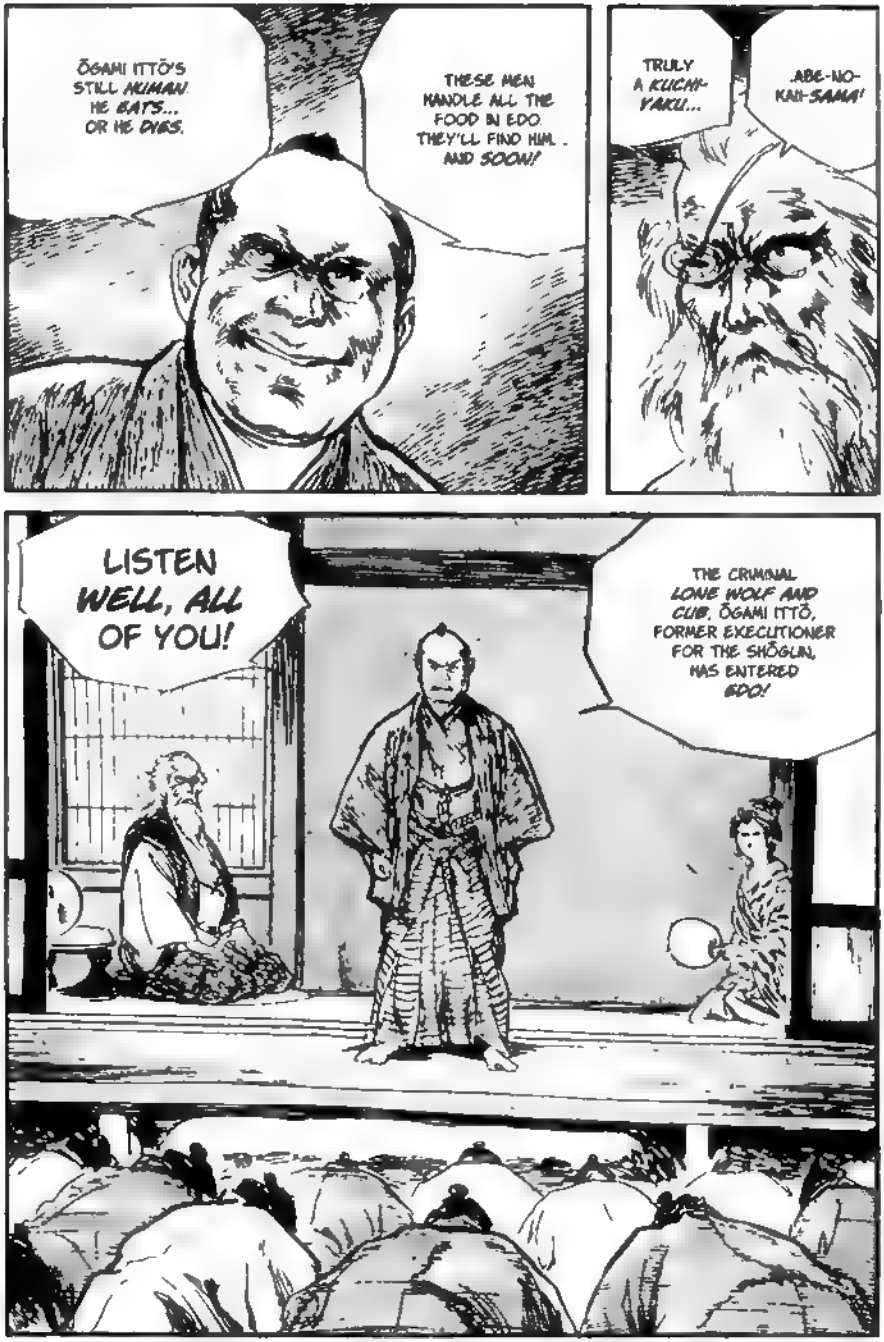
MNCH
MNCH
MNCH
GLP
*ABE

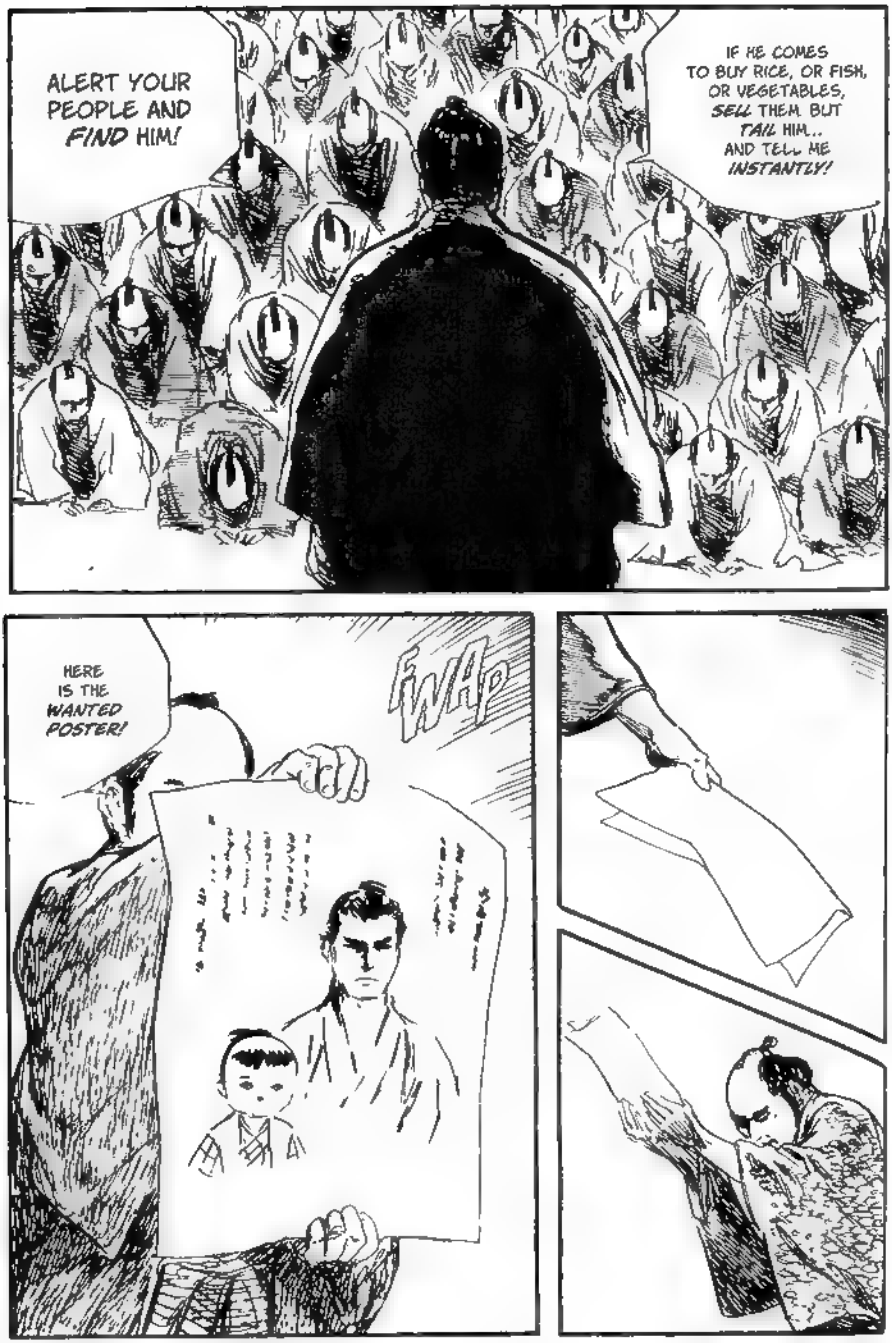



MY MEN WILL BE HERE SHORTLY ..
..FROM ACROSS ALL EDO
ACROSS ALL EDO..?!
AND ALL TRUST-WORTHY ?
UNLIKE YOUR CLAN, YAGYÛ-SAMA, THEY'RE AS HOPELESS WITH A SWORD AS I AM. YET EDO'S VERY LIFE IS IN THEIR HANDS

WHAT...?!
AH. I SAID IT WAS URGENT
AND SO— HERE THEY ARE.

THE RULERS OF EDO'S KITCHENS!
ECHIZENYA KAKEI, HEAD OF THE RICE DEALERS.
SIR!
YAOZEN OF THE GREEN-GROCERS.
UOKYU OF THE FISHMONGERS.
BARS! MISO SHOPS! BAKERIES, EATERIES...
EVEN CHEFS! THEY CONTROL THEM ALL!
HOH...!


ŌGAMI ITTŌ'S STILL HUMAN. HE EATS... OR HE DIES.
THESE MEN HANDLE ALL THE FOOD IN EDO. THEY'LL FIND HIM... AND SOON!
TRULY A KUCHI-YAKU...
...ABE-NO-KAN-SAMA!
LISTEN WELL, ALL OF YOU!
THE CRIMINAL LONE WOLF AND CUB, ŌGAMI ITTŌ, FORMER EXECUTIONER FOR THE SHŌGUN, HAS ENTERED EDO!

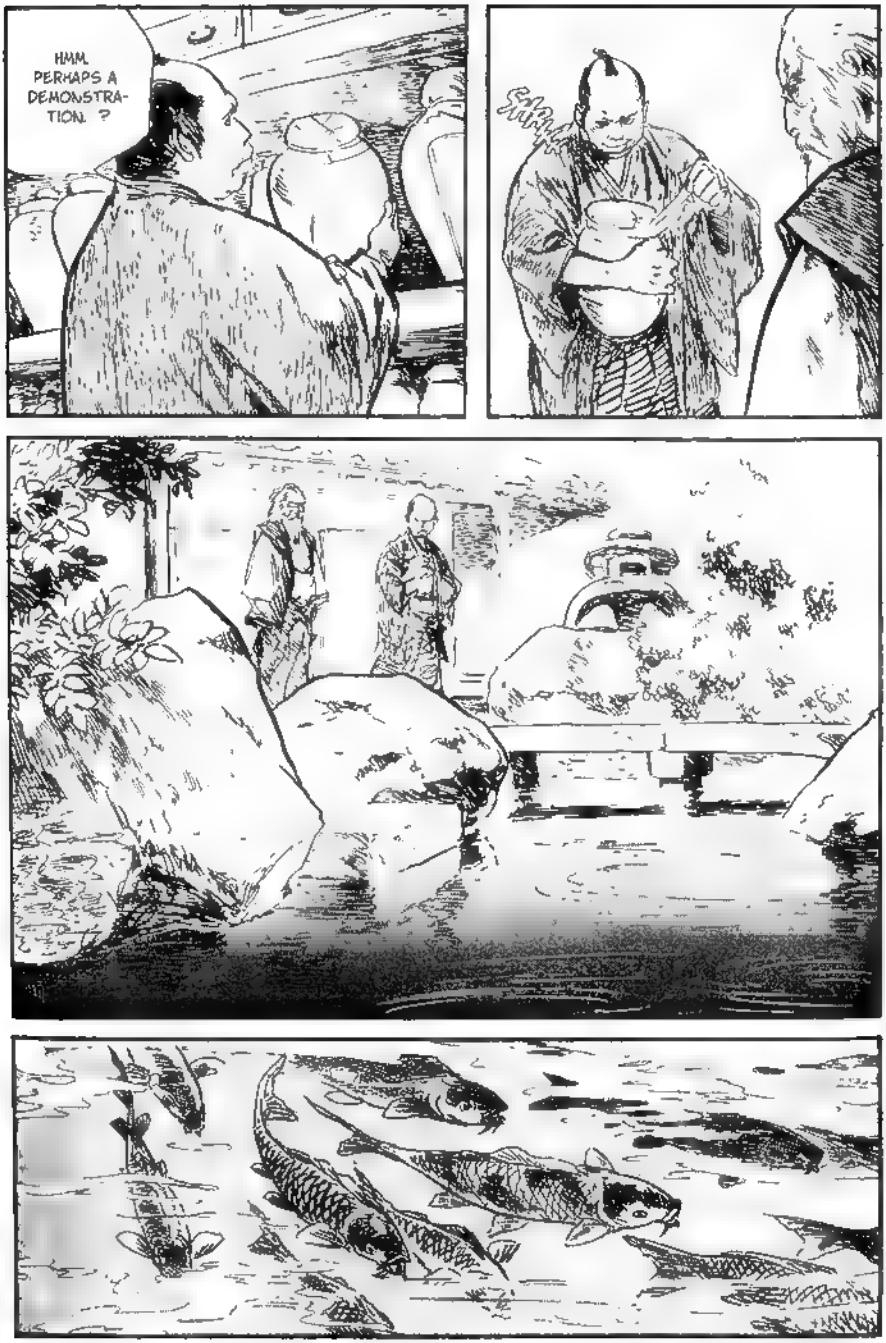

ALERT YOUR PEOPLE AND FIND HIM!
IF HE COMES TO BUY RICE, OR FISH, OR VEGETABLES, SELL THEM. BUT TAIL HIM... AND TELL ME INSTANTLY!
HERE IS THE WANTED POSTER!
FWAP

FOCUS ON THE RIVERBANK AREAS!
UNDER-STAND?!
YES, ABE-NO-KAII-SAMA!
THEN GO! NOW!!

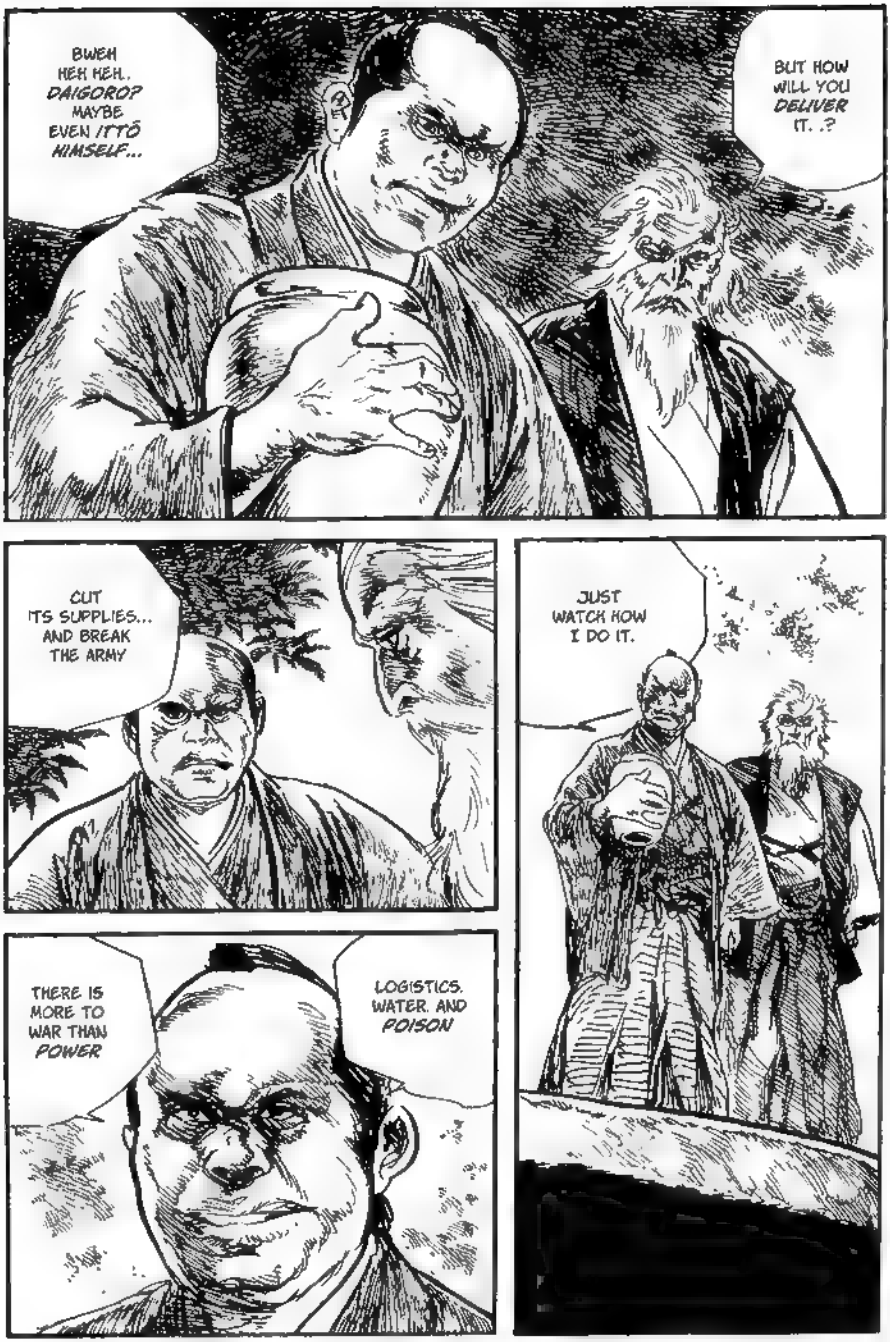
IN TWO KOKU, EVERY RICE DEALER, FISHMONGER, GREENGROCER
EVERY CANDY PEDDLER, FISHERMAN, AND PEASANT IN EDO WILL HAVE ORDERS.
THEY'LL TELL US WHERE ITTŌ IS.
HEH HEH. . . EVEN WOLVES HAVE TO EAT!
AND WHEN THEY FIND HIM.
THIS WAY, PLEASE.

THE APOTHECARY OF JAPAN'S GREATEST POISONER, ABE TANOSHI!
FEAST YOUR EYES, RETSUDŌ-SAMA!

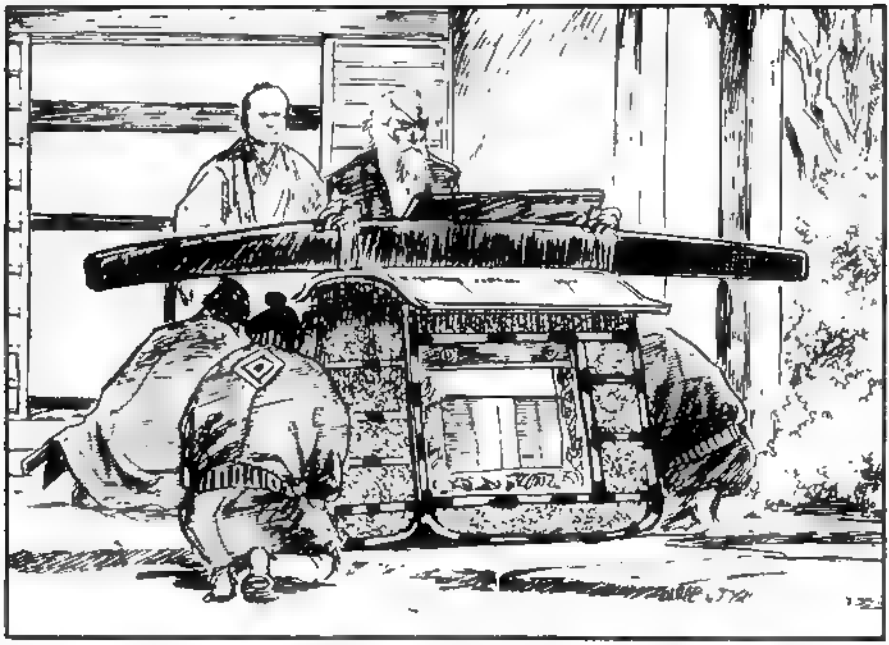
EVERY KNOWN PO SON. AND ALL MY OWN SPECIAL MIXES
FOR EXAMPLE.. ADD HABU VIPER VENOM TO MONK'S HOOD— TWICE AS POTENT!
ANDROMEDA, GENISTA, YELLOW RHODODENDRON, IVY, TAKENIGUSA, KALOPANAX, YUZURI...
I GREW THEM, EXTRACTED THEM, REFINED THEM TO BE ODORLESS AND TASTELESS

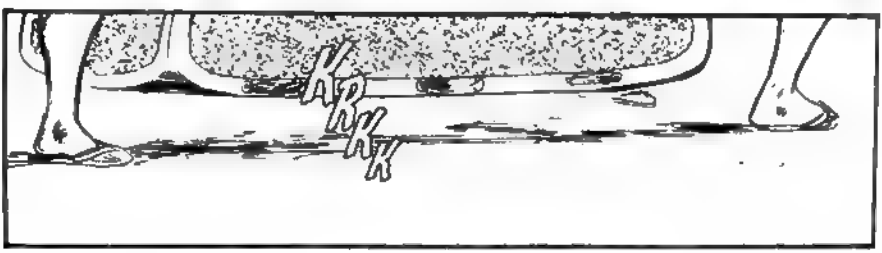

HMM. PERHAPS A DEMONSTRA-TION. ?
SHING

HRG..!
SPSH


BWEH HEH HEH.. DAIGOROP MAYBE EVEN ITTŌ HIMSELF...
BUT HOW WILL YOU DELIVER IT..?
CUT ITS SUPPLIES... AND BREAK THE ARMY
JUST WATCH HOW I DO IT.
THERE IS MORE TO WAR THAN POWER
LOGISTICS. WATER. AND POISON

AND THE DAY I DELIVER SOME GRACIOUS SUPPORT..?
EHEH HEH HEH!
I LEAVE IT TO YOU.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING




KRAK

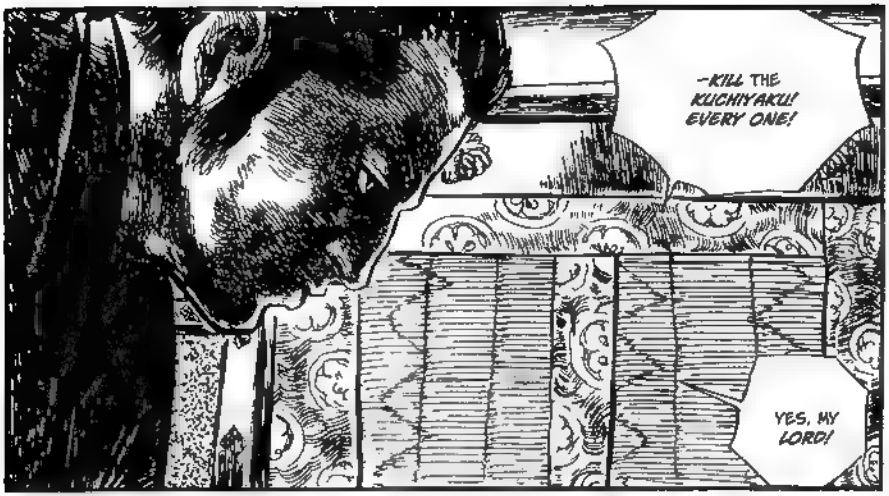
SO, RETSUDŌ! YOUR EYE JUST ABOUT POPPED OUT OF YOUR HEAD...

FIRST BURY ITTŌ, AND GET THE YAGYŪ LETTER.
AND THEN... YOU'RE NEXT!

...DIDN'T IT, OLD MAN?!
HEH, HEH.. YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUE.

THE KUROKUWA AND THE ŌGAMI CLAN ALREADY GONE
JUST THE YAGYŪ LEFT
IF I BRING THEM DOWN THE ABE CLAN CONTROLS THE NATION!
OUR LORD ALREADY TRUSTS ME MORE THAN RETSUDŌ
AND IF I KILL ITTŌ, THE YAGYŪ NAME WILL BE WORTHLESS TRASH. EHEH HEH HEH.. HA HA HA!

AN EXCEEDINGLY *DEADLY* MAN. HE'S A THREAT TO US AS WELL.
JINNAI!
MY LORD!
WATCH ABE TANOSHI *CLOSELY*
IF HE *DOES* KILL ITTŌ THEN IN THAT VERY *INSTANT*—

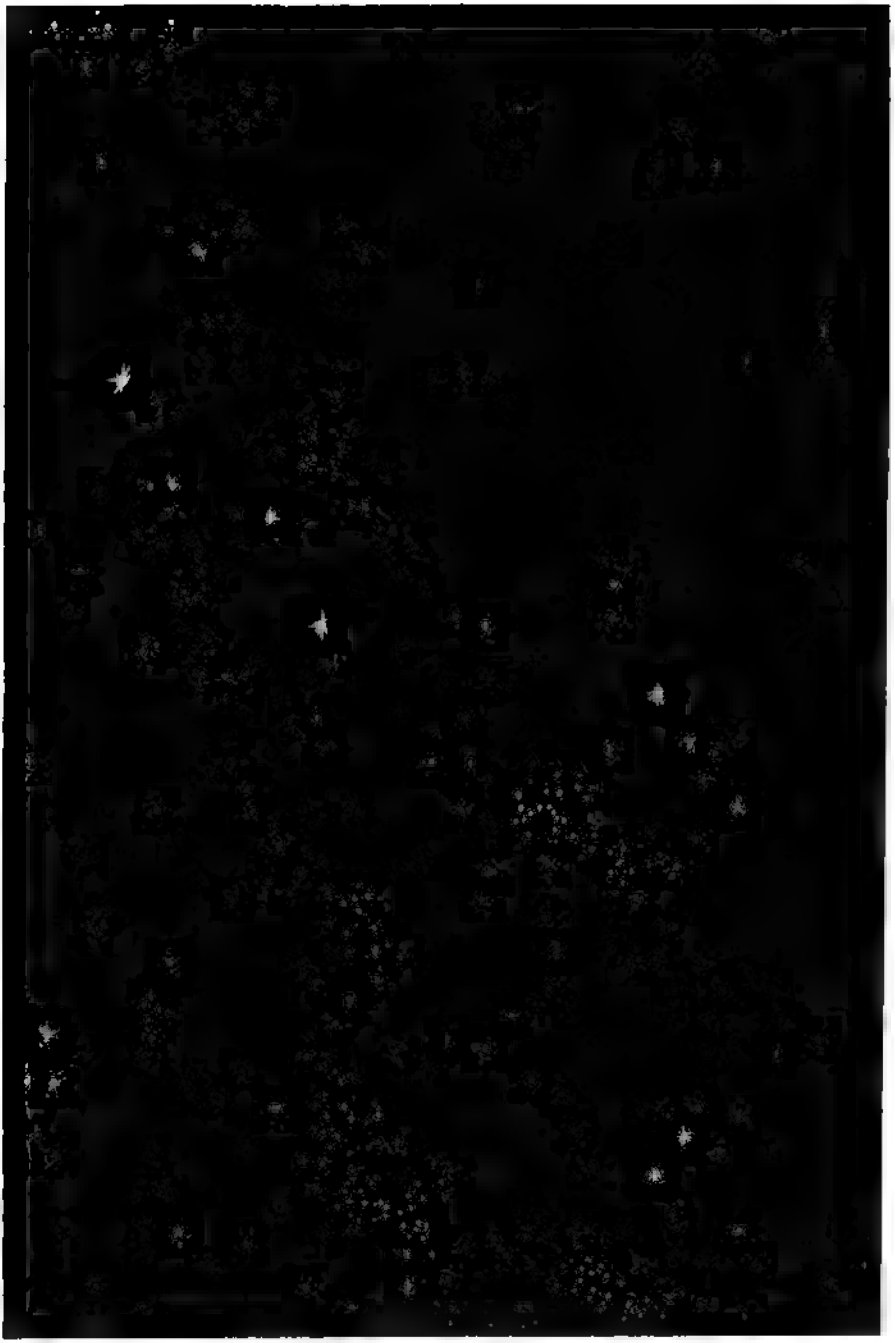

—KILL THE KUCHIYAKU! EVERY ONE!
YES, MY LORD!

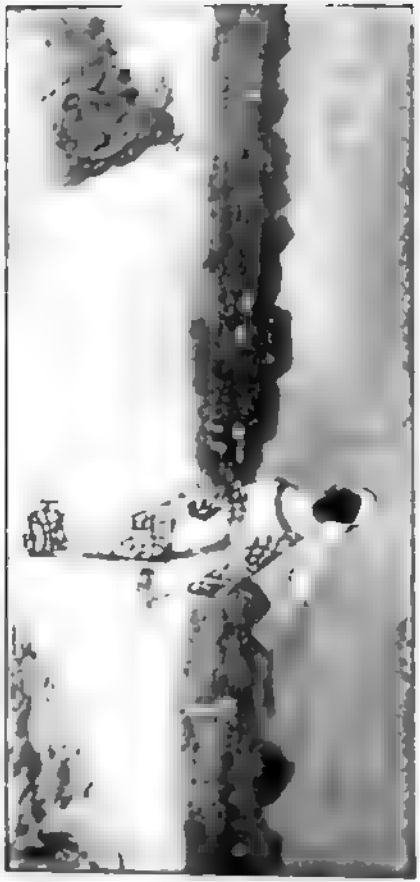
KAJO-NO-SHUKUJITSU... AN AUSPICIOUS DAY.
BUT FOR WHOM...?

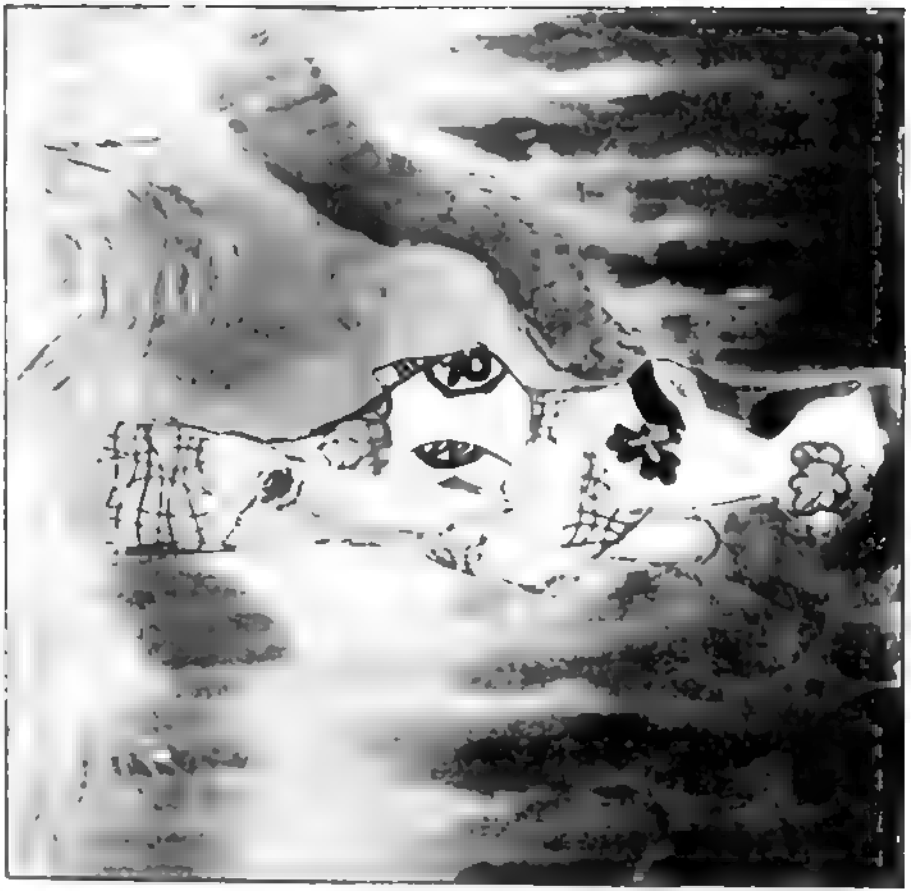
#MangaProject on irc.Dal.net
Lone Wolf and Cub

the ninety-ninth

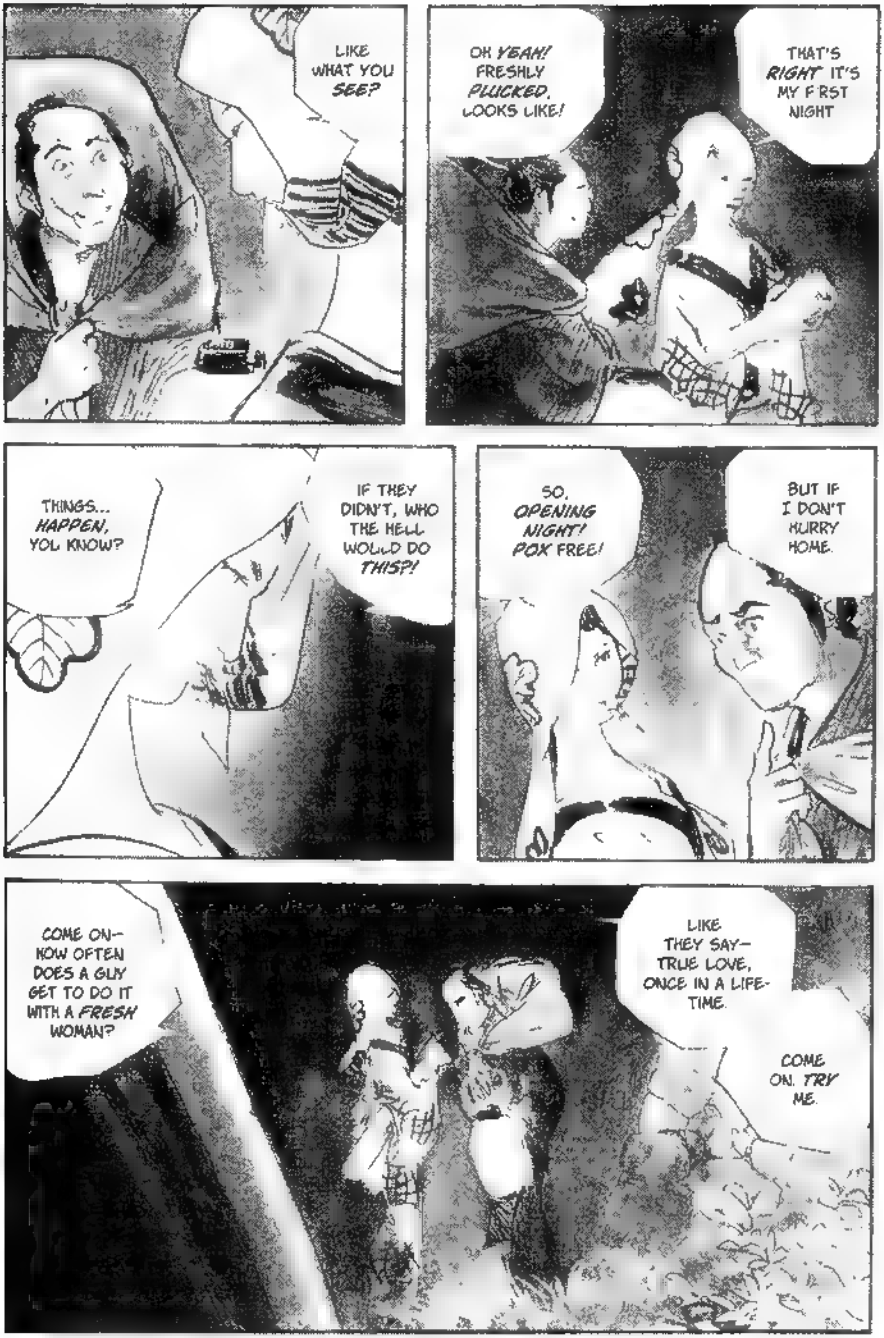
Lair of the Night-hawks







HEY, HANDSOME
WANT SOME FUN?
:PHEWW!: DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT
HOW ABOUT IT? SLOW NIGHT, I'LL GIVE YOU A DEAL CHEAP AS IT GETS.


LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?
OH YEAH! FRESHLY PLUCKED, LOOKS LIKE!
THAT'S RIGHT IT'S MY F RST NIGHT
THINGS... HAPPEN, YOU KNOW?
IF THEY DIDN'T, WHO THE HELL WOULD DO THIS?!
SO, OPENING NIGHT! POX FREE!
BUT IF I DON'T HURRY HOME.
COME ON— HOW OFTEN DOES A GUY GET TO DO IT WITH A FRESH WOMAN?
LIKE THEY SAY— TRUE LOVE, ONCE IN A LIFE-TIME.
COME ON. TRY ME.

SORRY.. IT'S BEEN WARM.. AND IT'S MY ONLY KIMONO.
BUT MAYBE YOU LIKE IT THAT WAY .? HOT AND SWEATY
JUST ONE REQUEST
DON'T LOOK AT MY BACK EVER! GOT IT?
OH, YEAH! S-SURE!

SPRSSH
SPASSH
SPRASH
SPASSH

HEY, LOVER BOY. GOT A LIGHT?
FFHH

WANT A PUFF ?
SURE, IF YOU DON'T MIND
THIS IS ABOUT GONE . I'LL REFILL IT
PUFF!
SSS

GHLLK
K!
AUGH!
HKK

KLOOSH!
WORKS LIKE A CHARM...!

IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR THOSE YOTAKA HAGS TO HIT THE STREETS..
BUT MAYBE I'LL TRY IT ON A COUPLE MORE GUYS..

HIC
FUGGIN JERK.. GONNA

HIC
URRP

HEY BIG BOY

HUH? WHADDYA WANT?!
YOU STINKIN' NIGHTHAWKS CREEP ME OUT
NICE TOY PERFECT LENGTH, GOOD HEFT. SPRINGY.

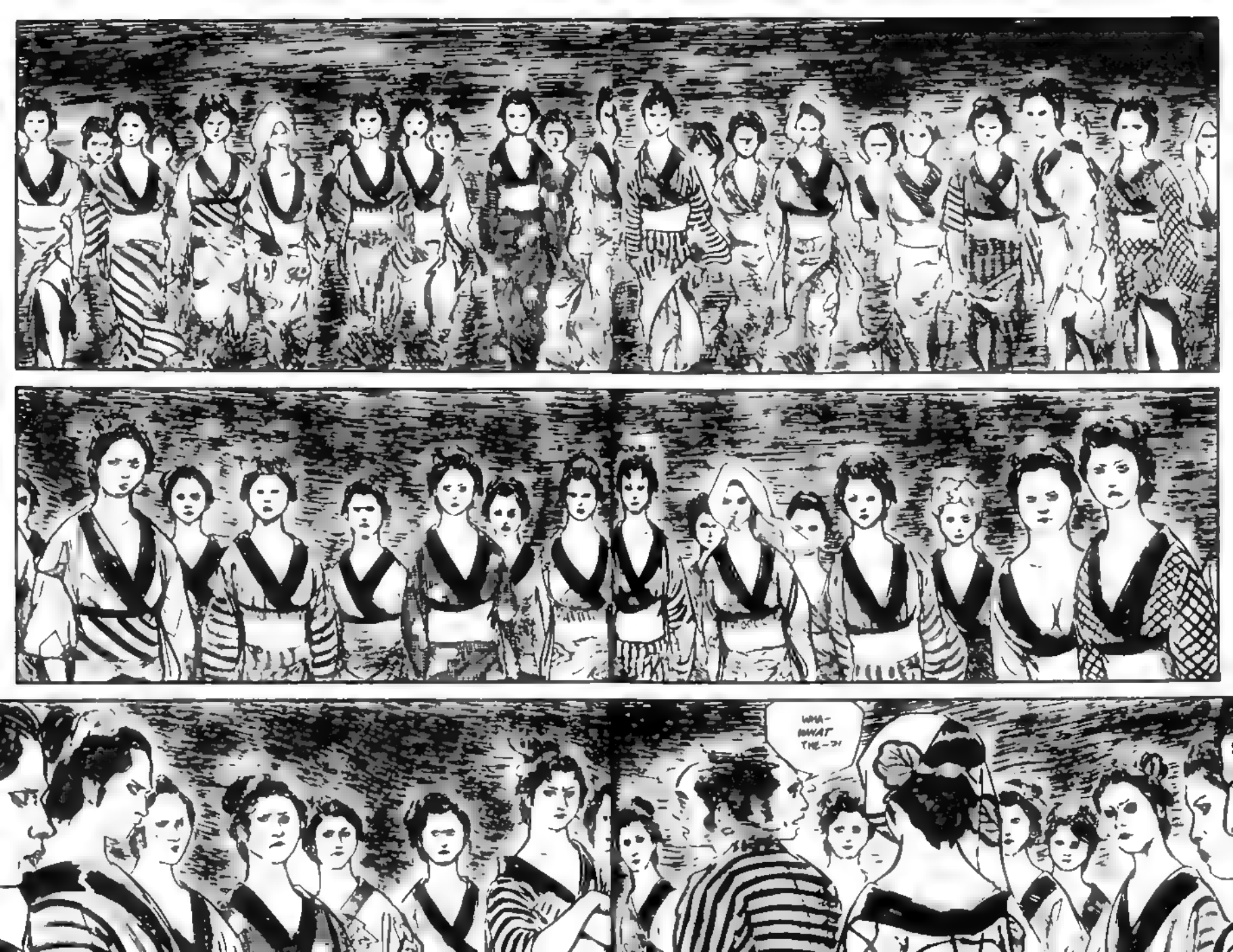
TALK SWEET, 'N' CARRY A BIG STICK! HIC: YOTAKA DON'T GET MEAT LIKE THIS, HEH, HEH.

WANT IT?
SURE I WANT IT . AND I'M CHEAP.

HEY, FUCK YOU, SLUT!
IF YOU WANT SOMETHING, YOU PAY!

SELLER'S MARKET, HEH HEH.

DAMN. THEY'RE HERE.
HN. ?


WHA-
WHAT
THE--?!

CLEAR OUT, JOHN-BOY!
YAIEE!!
YOU!! WHO SAID YOU COULD WORK HERE?!
THIS RIVER'S KAWA-MATAZA TURF!
HMPH! MATAZA, MATAGURA, WHO GIVES A SHIT? SINCE WHEN DO NIGHTHAWKS RATE TURF?!

WHAT'D YOU SAY?!
I PICK UP WHO I WANT, WHERE I WANT I DON'T ASK A BUNCH OF POXY HAGS FOR PERMISSION!

DON'T GIVE ME ATTITUDE, BITCH!
I'M O-TAKA OF THE MATAZA! I RUN SEVEN HUNDRED NIGHTHAWKS!

SO? WHO GIVES A SHIT?!

I'M NOT SOME COUNTRY GIRL YOU CAN SCARE! I'M "SILK SPIDER" O-TOSHI, THE YAKUZA THIEF!

BITCH! DON'T CRY FOR MOMMA LATER!
TAKE HER!
YOU SLUT!
DAMN YOU. !
EEEK!
AGGH!

DAMN IT...!!
EEEEK!
GYAAH!

HEH HEH HEH. WHAT NOW, BITCH? THAT SPIDER'S GONNA BE CRYING TEARS OF BLOOD!
AUUHHN!

PUTT!
WHEN WE'RE DONE WITH YOU.
YOU'LL NEVER WORK AGAIN, SLUT! BETTER SAY YOUR PRAYERS!
ALL RIGHT, LADIES- IT'S INCENSE TIME!
YEAH!!
SHOW HER!

HEH HEH HEH. LOOKING A LITTLE PALE? I GUESS YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT OUR INCENSE!
FUCK YOU, YOU WHORE!
FIRST, WE BURN OFF YOUR NIPPLES, SEE? THEN WE WORK DOWN TO YOUR PUSSY, THEN DEEP INSIDE!
AND LAST, WE BURN OUT YOUR EYEBALLS... SO GET READY! OF COURSE, IF YOU APOLOGIZE NICELY ENOUGH, I MIGHT LET YOU JOIN MY GANG INSTEAD
NO?! OKAY, THEN— BURN HER!
HEH. SHE'S GOT GUTS.
YOU READY ?
HEE, HEE! YEAH!
WA-WAIT! STOP!
SHUDDUP! IT'S TOO LATE!
I KNOW! BUT, A SMOKE! A LAST SMOKE!
HUH..?!
I GOT THE HABIT BAD!

I LIVE FOR KIZAMI TOBACCO! AND ONLY THE BEST!
I'VE FALLEN SO FAR, IT'S ALL I'VE GOT EXPENSIVE SHIT, TOO. THAT'S WHY I SELL MYSELF— TO BUY IT!
SURE, WHY NOT?
WHERE IS IT?
IT'S IN MY SLEEVE.
HMPH! NICE KISERU PIPE! HMM. I WONDER WHAT GOOD KIZAMI IS LIKE...?
FFUU

OH. THIS. IT'S SO DIFFERENT!
IT'S REALLY NICE...
NOW, MY TURN!! MINE!!
OOOH. SO GOOD... LIKE F-FLOATING ON CLOUDS..
REALLY?! C-CAN I HAVE A PUFF?
HFFF
FHHH

D-DAMN THOSE SLUTS!! IT'S ALL GONE!
Hff Hff
AUGH!!
AAH. AHH!
I I WANT IT! IT HURTS!!
OOOH... AAHH!!
OH, GOD. I I'M DYING..
KI. KIZAMI!! NNGGH..

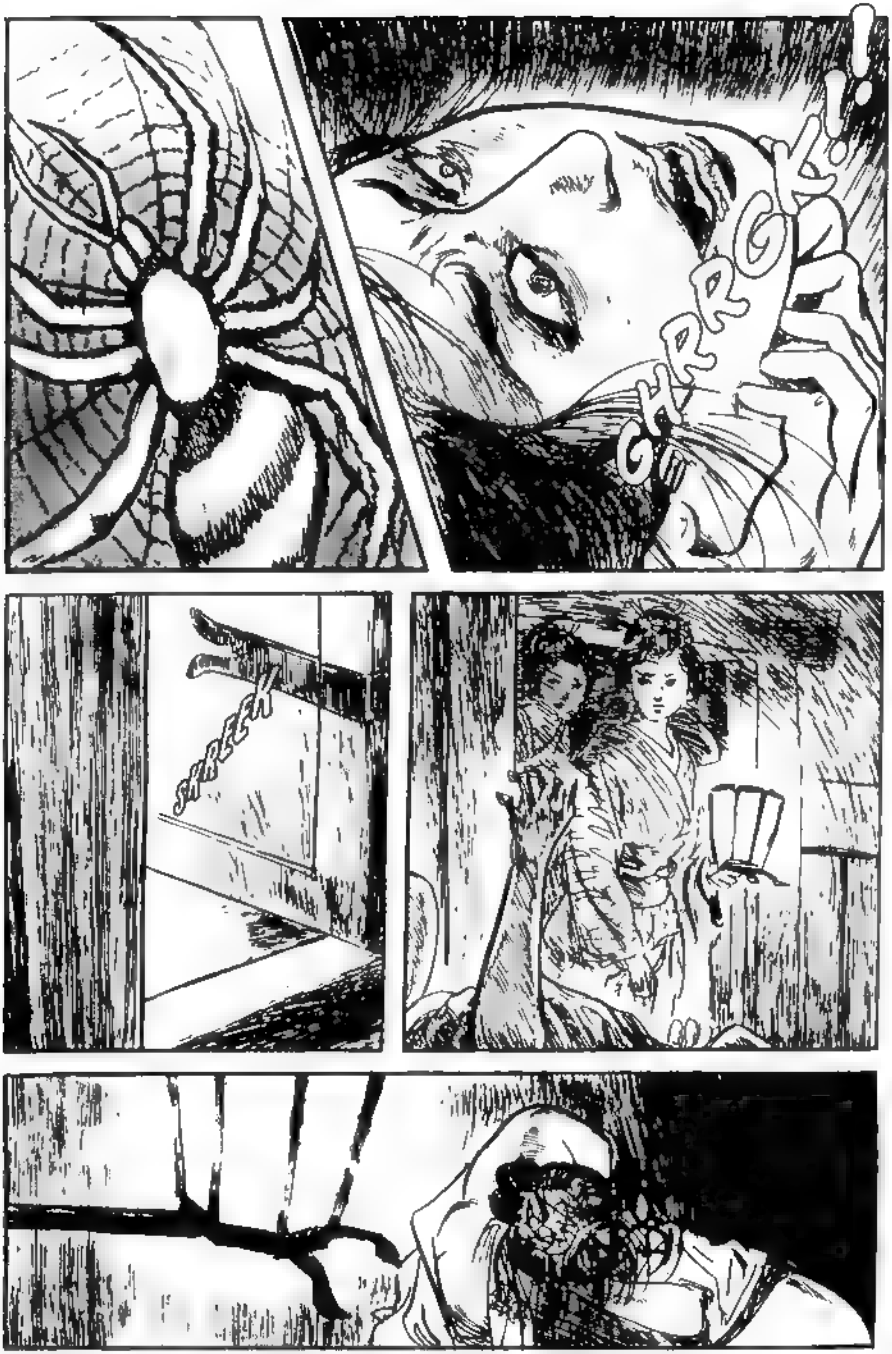
BAM BAM
STRRC

UHN.
. . . .

阿部
*ABE

P-PLEASE.. OH GOD, PLEASE! I.... CAN'T...
PLEASE, GOZEN-SAMA... YOUR KIZAMI!

AHNG...!
HAGK!
AAH..
AUGH..
UNNGH!
HA
EE!
AAGH!!

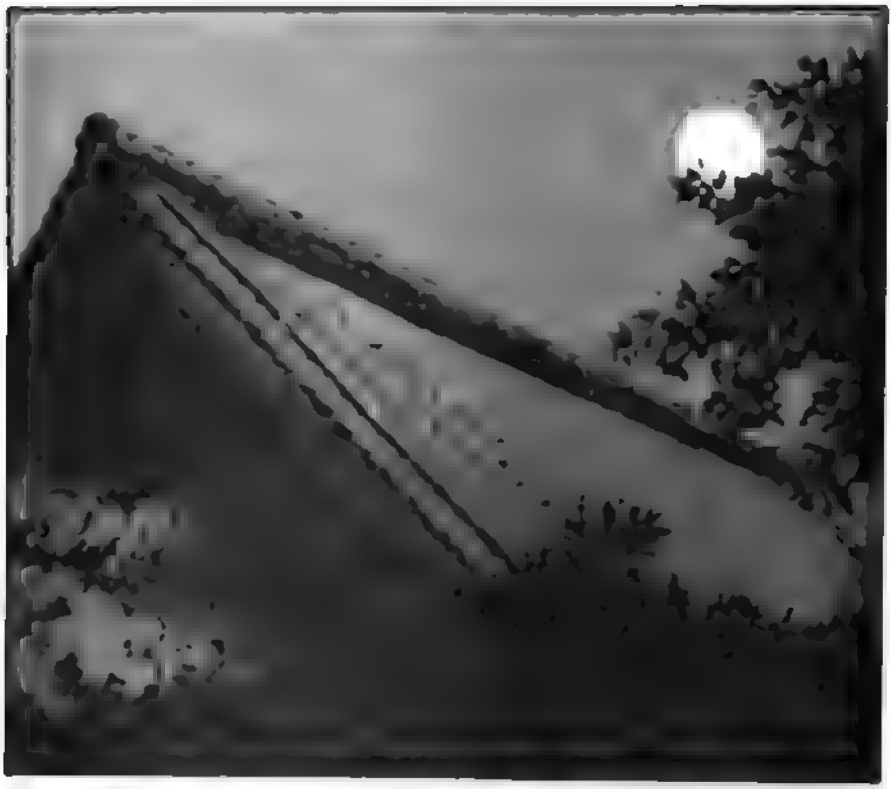

GHRRGK!!
SKREEK

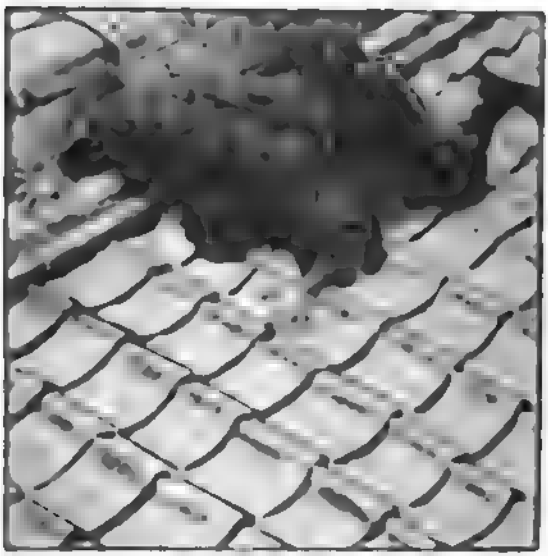
P PLEASE.
GOD, PLEASE...
K-KIZAMI!
BTAM

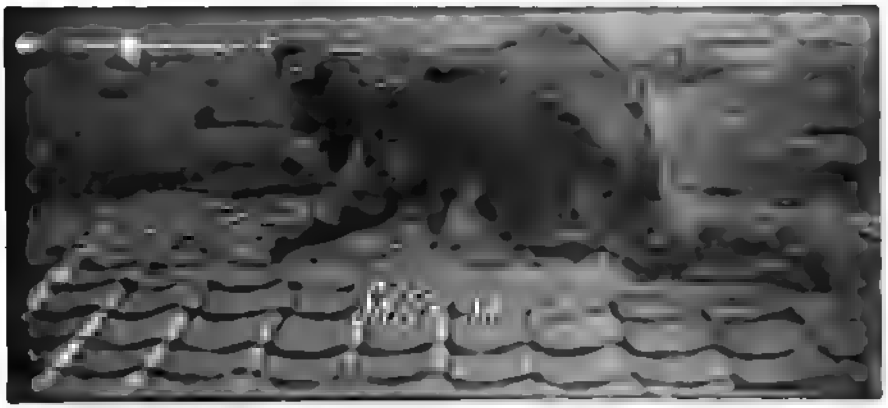
YOU STUPID SLUT!!
I TOLD YOU NEVER TO COME HERE!
DID YOU FORGET?!
PLEASE. FORGIVE ME. BUT. .
I'M OUT OF YOUR KIZAMI! I COULDN'T WAIT!

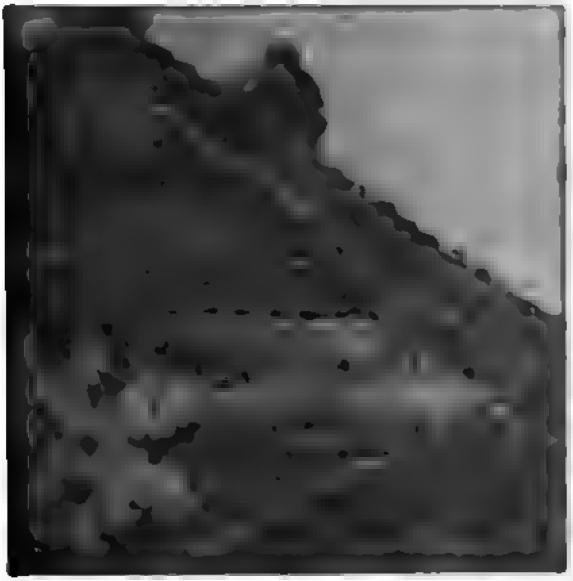
PLEASE!
KIZAMI!
AH. AUHHG!
GOZEN-SAMA!
I'M DYING...!
ALL RIGHT
GIVE HER
A HIT

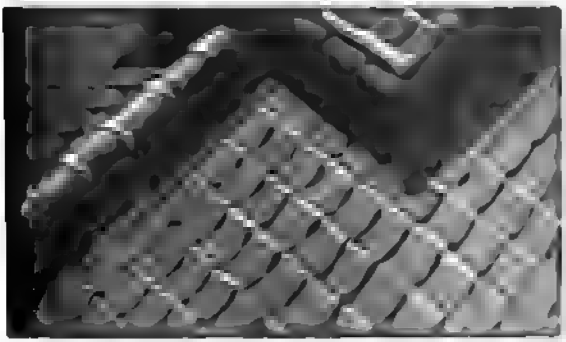
HNGN. !!
AHH...
....
SHE'LL BE OUT AWHILE. WHEN SHE WAKES UP, WASH HER, AND BRING HER TO MY ROOM.

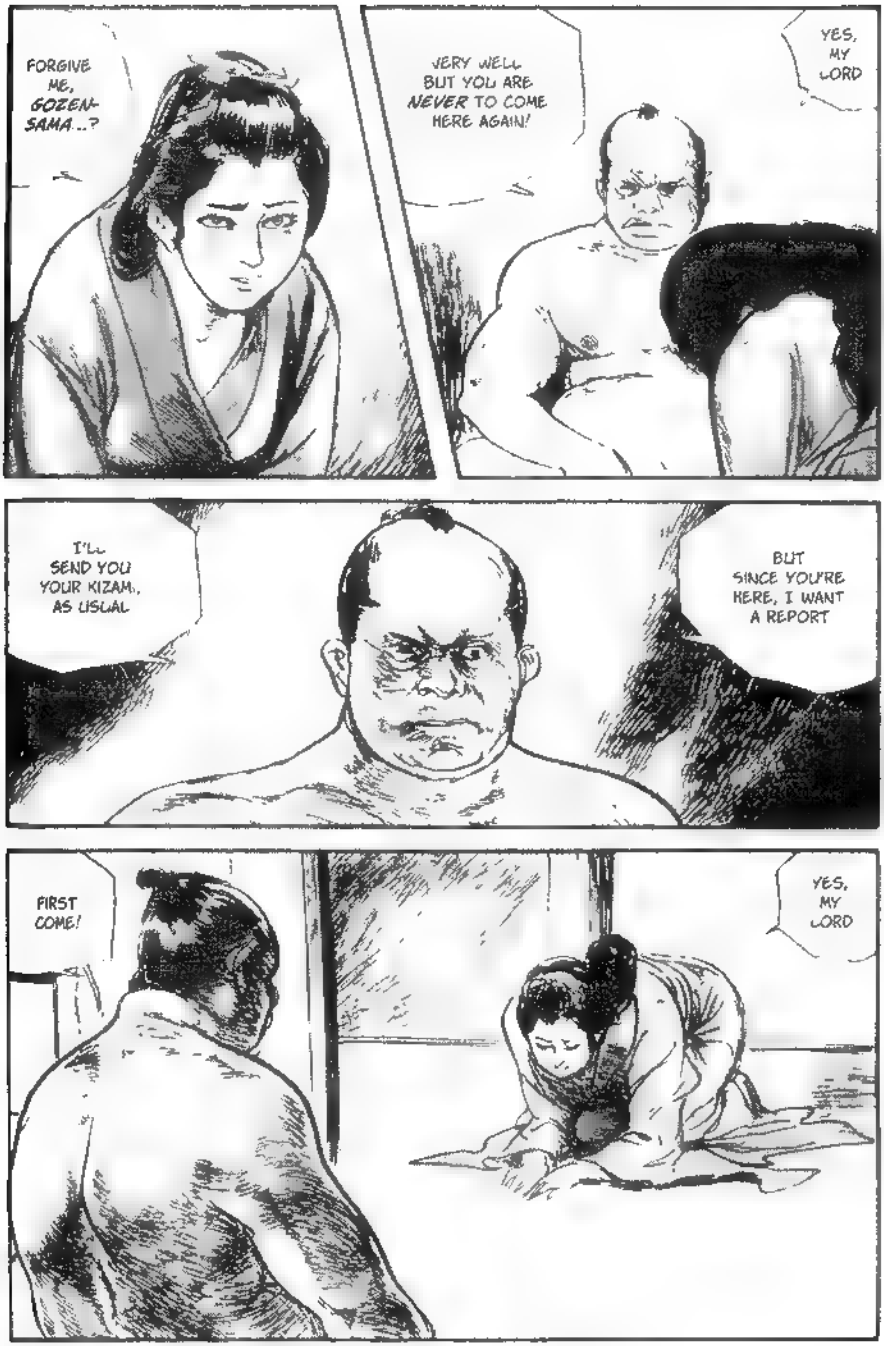


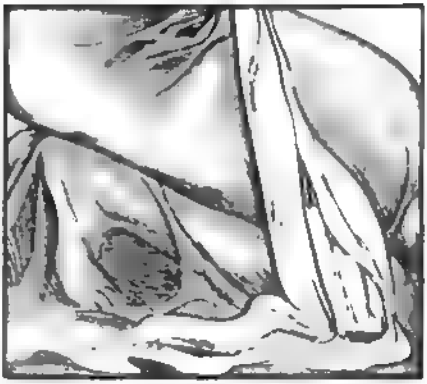


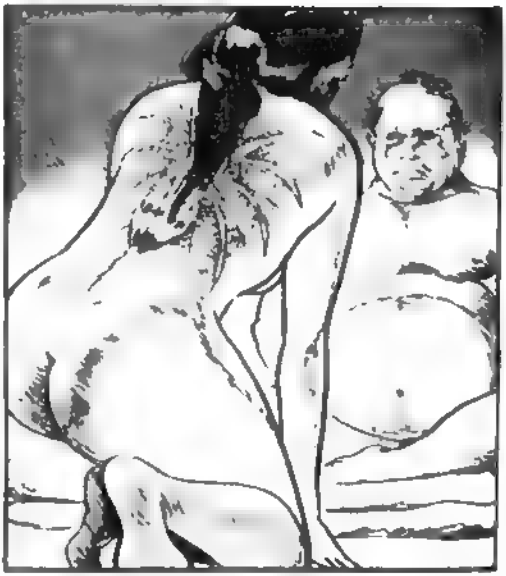




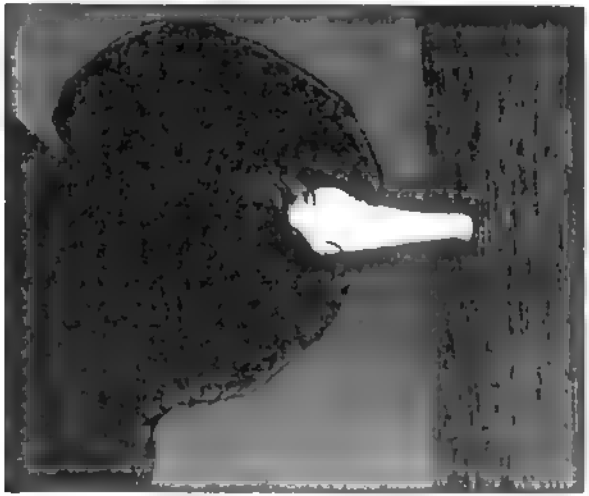


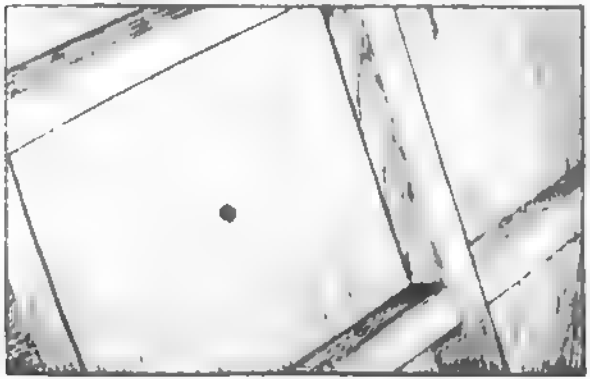

FORGIVE ME, GOZEN-SAMA..?
VERY WELL BUT YOU ARE NEVER TO COME HERE AGAIN!
YES, MY LORD
I'LL SEND YOU YOUR KIZAMI, AS USUAL
BUT SINCE YOU'RE HERE, I WANT A REPORT
FIRST COME!
YES, MY LORD

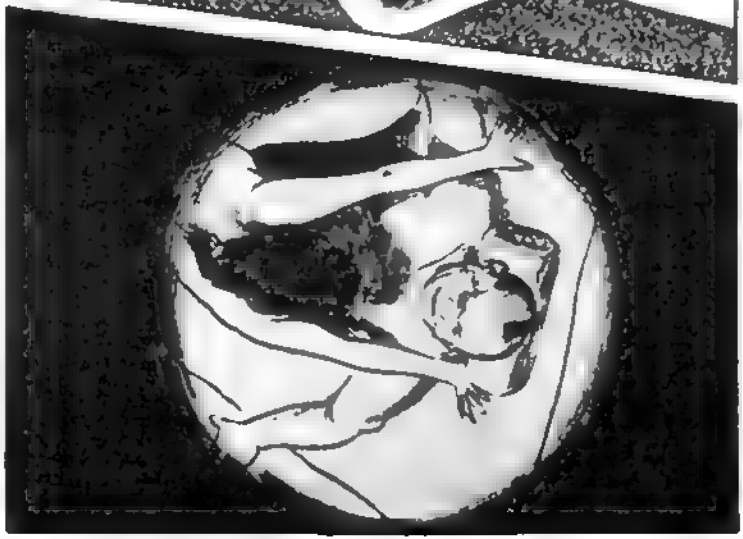




FWD



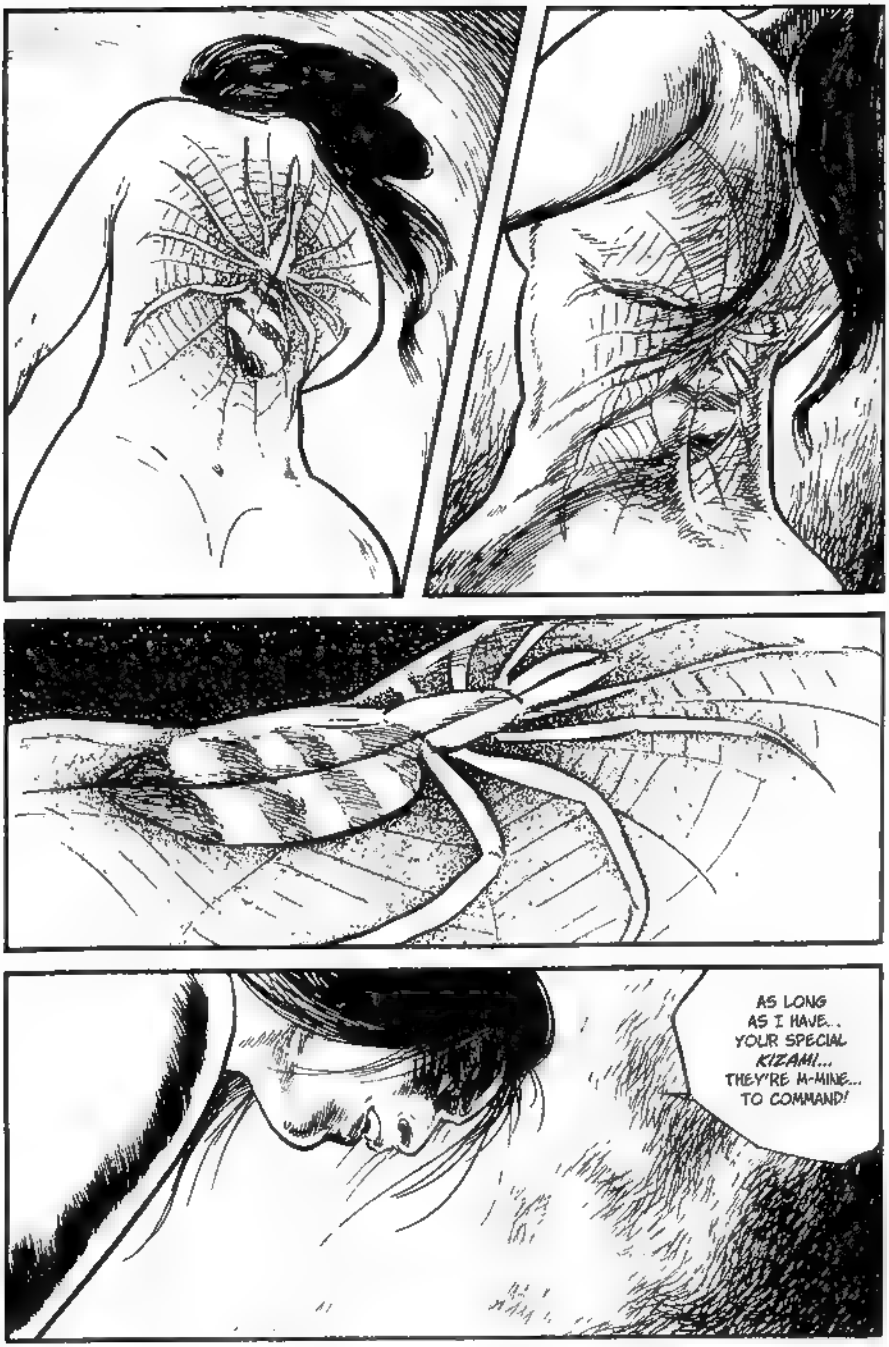




SO . DID YOU TRY THE KIZAMI WITH MONK'S HOOD AND HABU VENOM.. ?
Y-YES, SIR. I DID AS YOU COMMANDED.
AND THE RESULTS ..?!
SOME GUY . JUST ONE PUFF

AAHN!!
HRM!
I HOOKED THE NIGHTHAWKS ON YOUR KIZAMI... THE TYPE WITH AFUYŌ.
N-NOW THEY'LL DO WHATEVER I SAY. TO GET MORE. I'LL USE THEM. AS PART OF MY WEB...

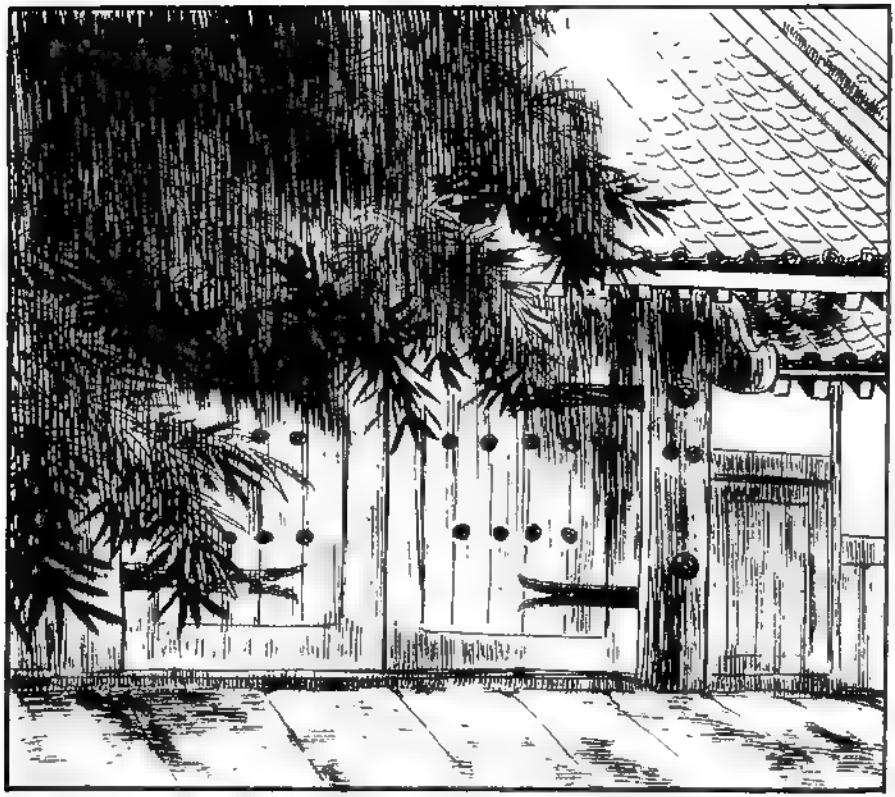
AH!
AHHH!
OHH!
MMMAAH!
AHHH!


AS LONG AS I HAVE.. YOUR SPECIAL KIZAMI... THEY'RE M-MINE... TO COMMAND!

THEN I'LL SEND YOU ALL YOU NEED
WITH THE YAGYU AND THE MACHI-BUGYŌ AFTER HIM, HE WAS TO HIDE
SO I LIKE PEOPLE WHO LIVE BY NIGHT STRATEGY!
NO SWORDS, NO JITTE, JUST THEM IN THE DARK, LIKE THE TREES AND GRASS...
NIGHTHAWKS!

HE WON'T SUSPECT STREET WALKERS! BWEH HEH HEH!
AHHHN!!
AH! OHH!!
EVERY PERSON HANDLING FOOD IN EDO, WATCHING THEY SPOT THEM. THE NIGHTHAWKS TRAP THEM. AND MY POISON KILLS FIRST DAIGORO...THEN ITTŌ HIMSELF! UNDERSTAND, O-TOSHI?! NO MISTAKES!
Y-YES, SIR.. OHH...!
BWEH HEH HEH! STRUGGLE AWAY AS HE MIGHT, HE'S TRAPPED, LIKE A FLY IN A SILK SPIDER'S WEB...

...AND THE SPIDER CAN'T ESCAPE ABE TANOSHI'S AFUYŌ KIZAMI AND KUSASUGIKAZURA APHRODISIACS!
RIGHT, O-TOSHI?! YOU LIKE IT!
AHH! AHHN!
SWEH HEH HEH HEH!
AHAHAHAHA!
BWAHAHAHAHA!



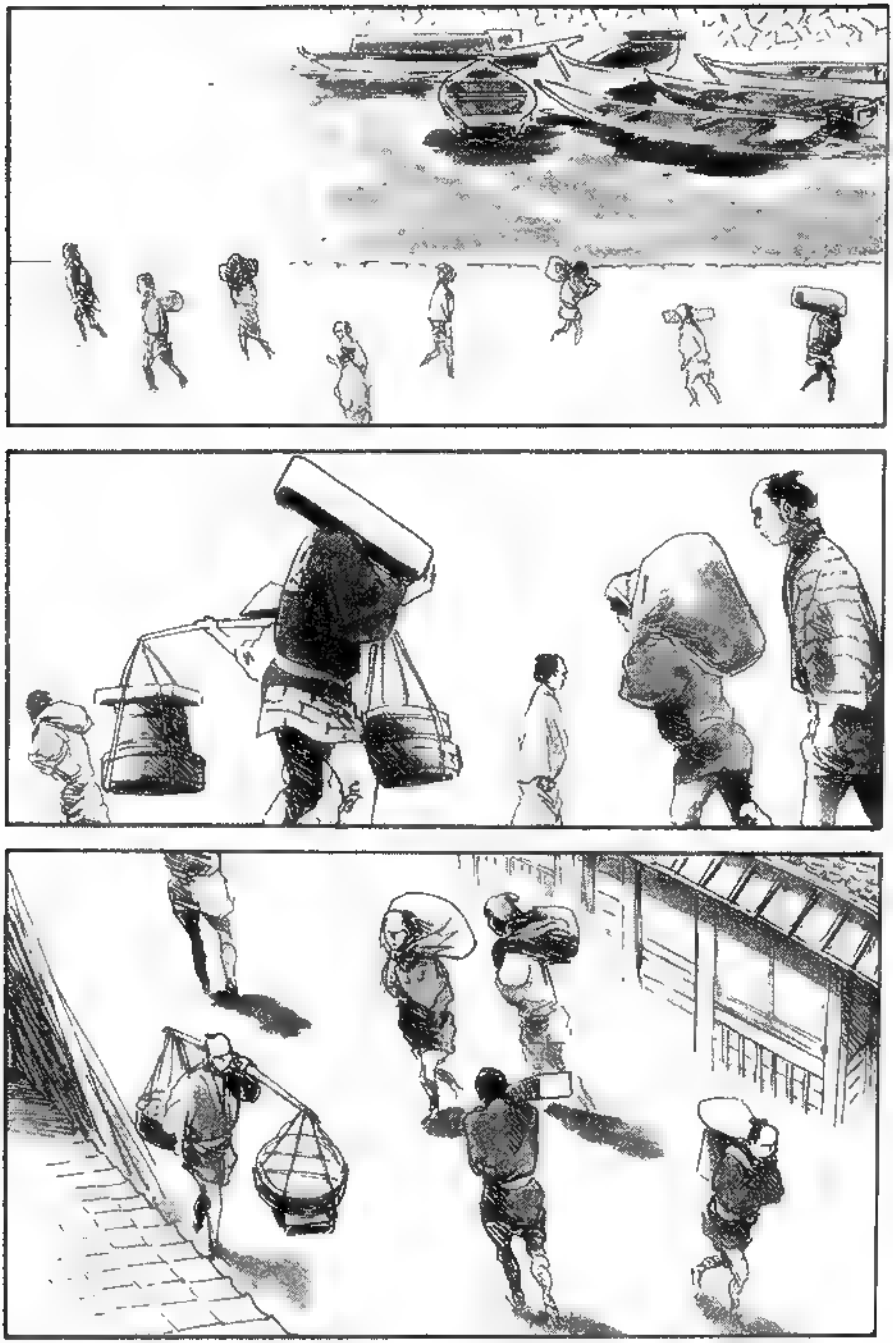
JINNAI ?
MY LORD.
HAS ABE-NO-KAII MADE HIS MOVE?
YES, MY LORD HE USED A WOMAN THIEF CALLED "SILK SPIDER" TO HOOK THE NIGHTHAWKS ON *AFUYŌ*.
HE'LL HAVE THEM APPROACH LONE WOLF AND CUB, AND *POISON* THEM, STARTING WITH THE BOY
HMM. *NIGHT-HAWKS*

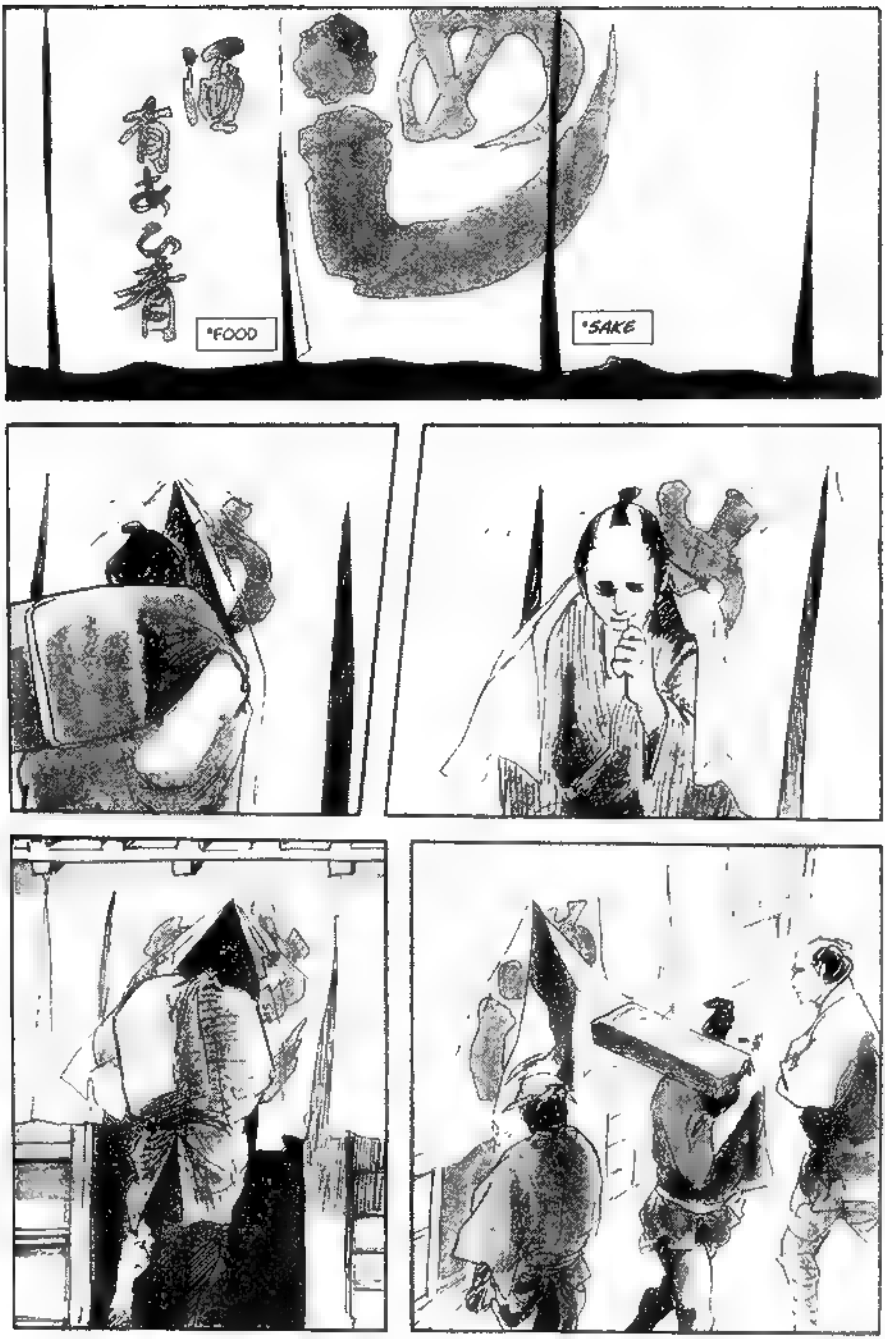
IS THERE ANY COMMONER IN EDO HE DOESN'T CONTROL? DANGEROUS INDEED
BUT THUS PERHAPS PERFECT FOR KILLING LONE WOLF, MY LORD.
YES.. LONE WOLF, VERSUS ABE-NO-KAII.
THIS I MUST SEE!
HEH HEH.
HEH HEH HEH!

#MangaProject on irc.Dal.net
Lone Wolf and Cub

the hundredth

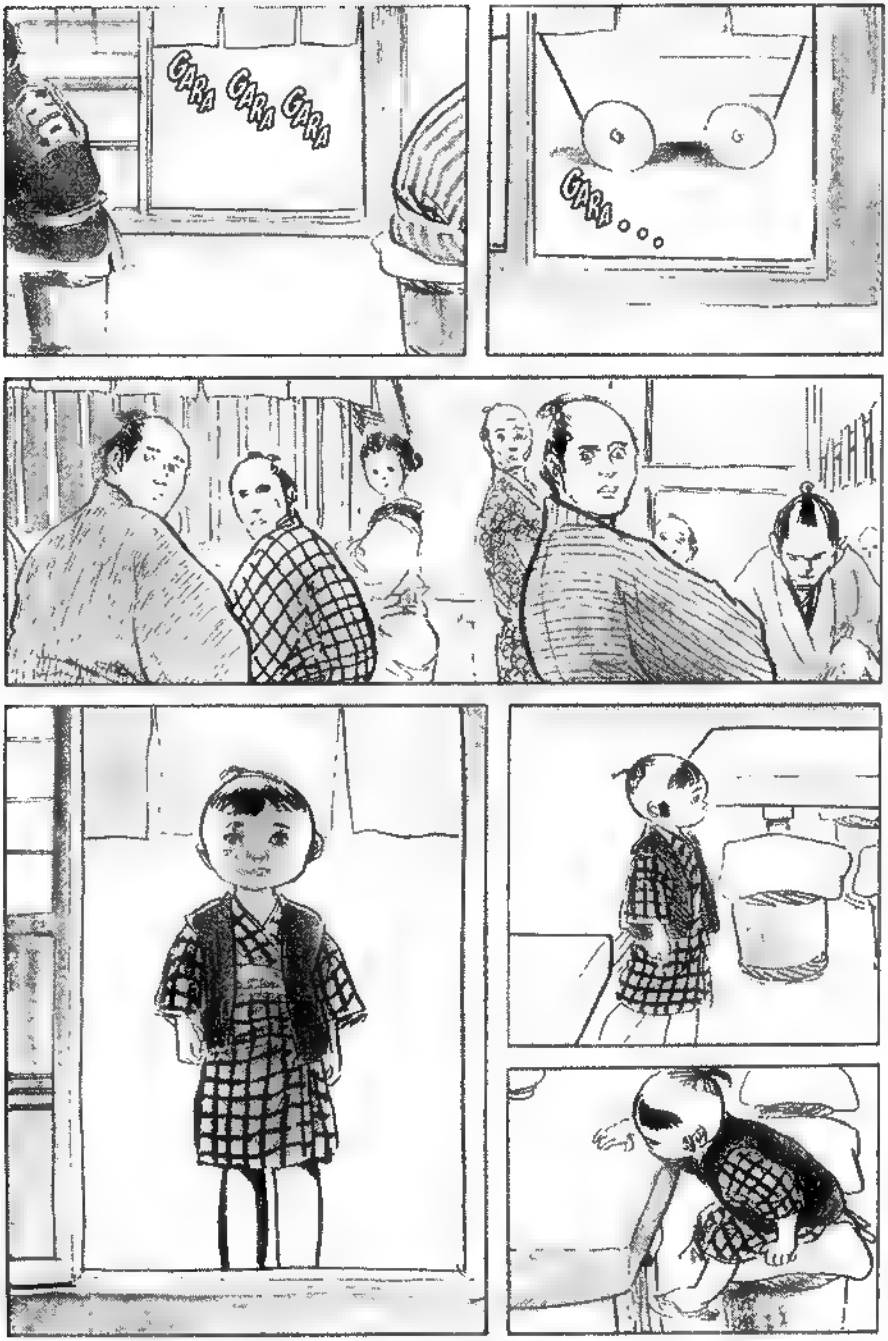
Blighted Leaves




*FOOD
*SAKE

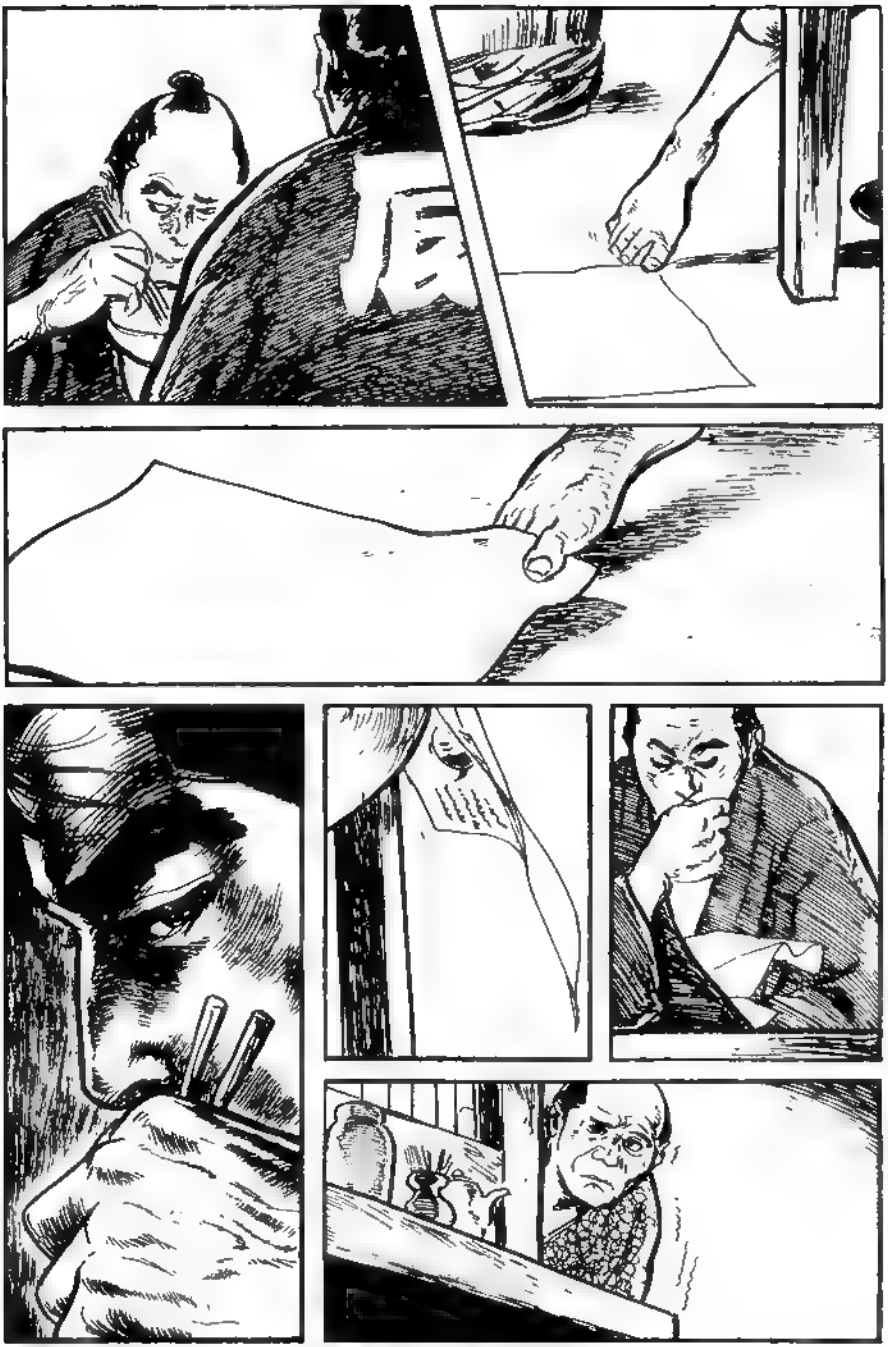
THAT'S CRAZY.
LONE WOLF AND CUB, HUH?
MAN. FIVE THOUSAND RYŌ!
SERIOUS TOUGH GUY!
mrch mrch
SEEMS LIKE EDO FOLK DON'T MUCH KNOW HIM.
THE CAPITAL, AND EVEN NEWBORN BABES DO!
FOLK PISS IN THEIR PANTS AT THAT NAME, LET ME TELL YOU!
NO WAY!

HE'S A CONTRACT KILLER THE BEST!
DAMN... AND HIM WITH THAT CUTE KID? I DUNNO, DAD OR NOT, IT AIN'T RIGHT TO TAKE A KID ALONG ON MURDERS.
HEY, DOLL! ANOTHER BOWL OF SOUP!
COMING UP!
SECONDS ON THE RICE, HERE!
GOT YA!
SO, MASTER... WHAT IF WE SPOT HIM..?
WE TELL ABE TANOSHI, THE KUCHI-YAKU
HUH? THE POISON TASTER?
NOT THE BUGYÔ..?

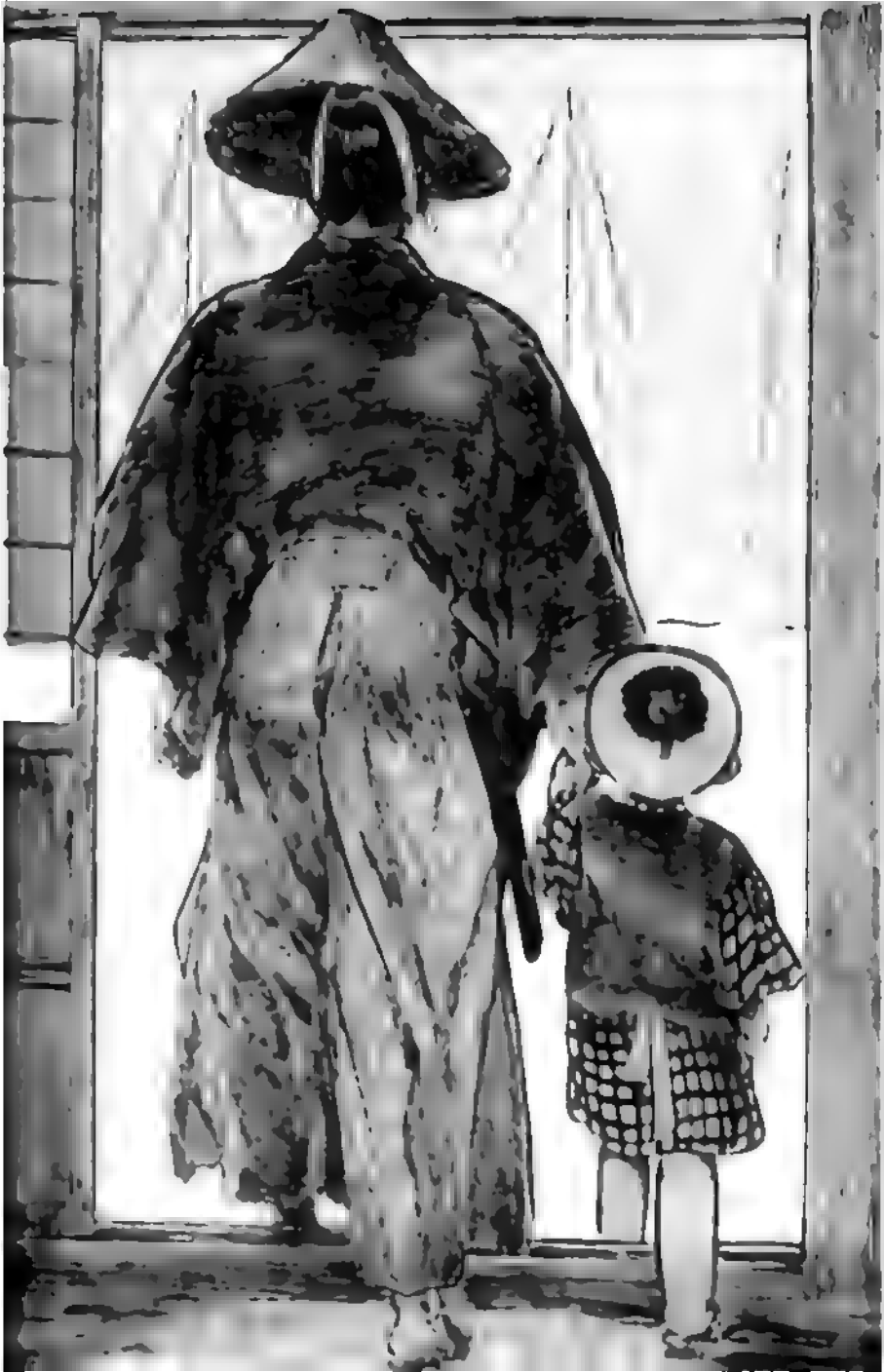

GARA GARA GARA
GARA...

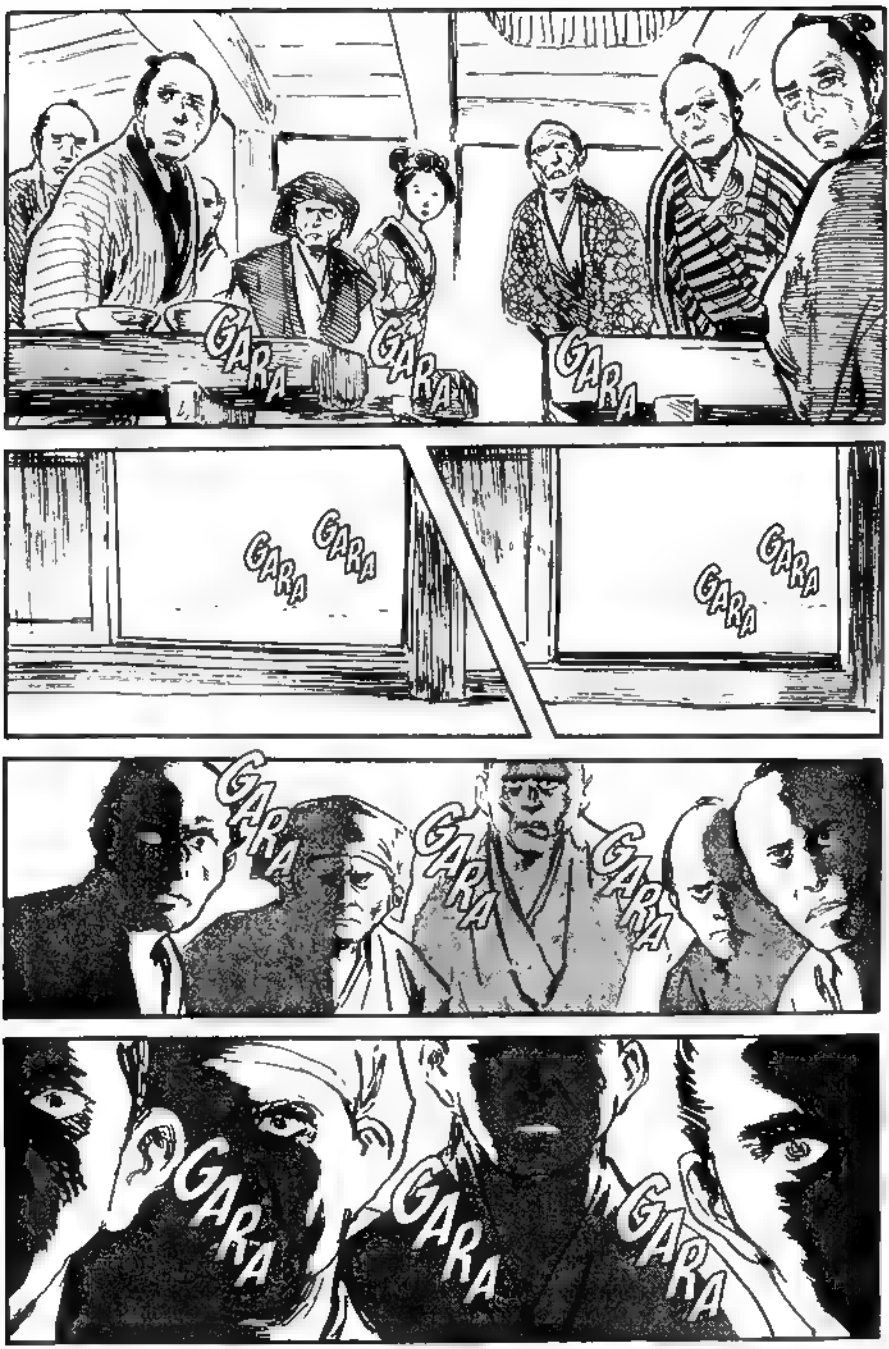
FOOD, PLEASE. BOILED VEGETABLES AND RICE WILL DO.
Y-YASSIR...

GO TELL THE KUCHIYAKU... HURRY!
G-G-G.. GOTCHA!



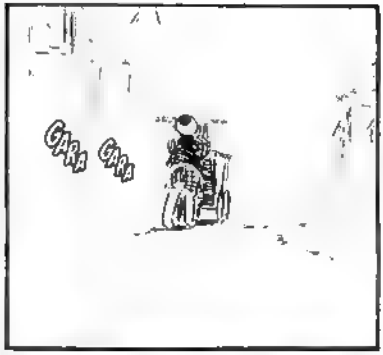
IT'S ON THE TABLE.
AH. TH-THANK YOU, SIR!




GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA

L-LONE WOLF AND CUB!
YEAH!! IT'S GOTTA BE!
THE SPITTIN' IMAGE OF THE POSTER!
MASTER! THE KUCHIYAKU...?
YAOSHICHI'S HOOFIN' IT THERE NOW!

AND YOU MEN! TAIL HIM. BUT CAREFUL LIKE!
TAKE TURNS! IF IT'S JUST ONE GUY, HE'LL NOTICE..
GOT YA, BOSS!
THE KUCHIYAKU LOOKS AFTER US! WE'LL TRACK THIS GUY NTO HELL IF HE SAYS SO!
DON'T GET COCKY! 'N DON'T LOSE HIM!
WHA-?!
AIIEE!!


GARA GARA

I EXPECTED YAGYŪ... BUT THE DOKUMI KUCHIYAKU?!

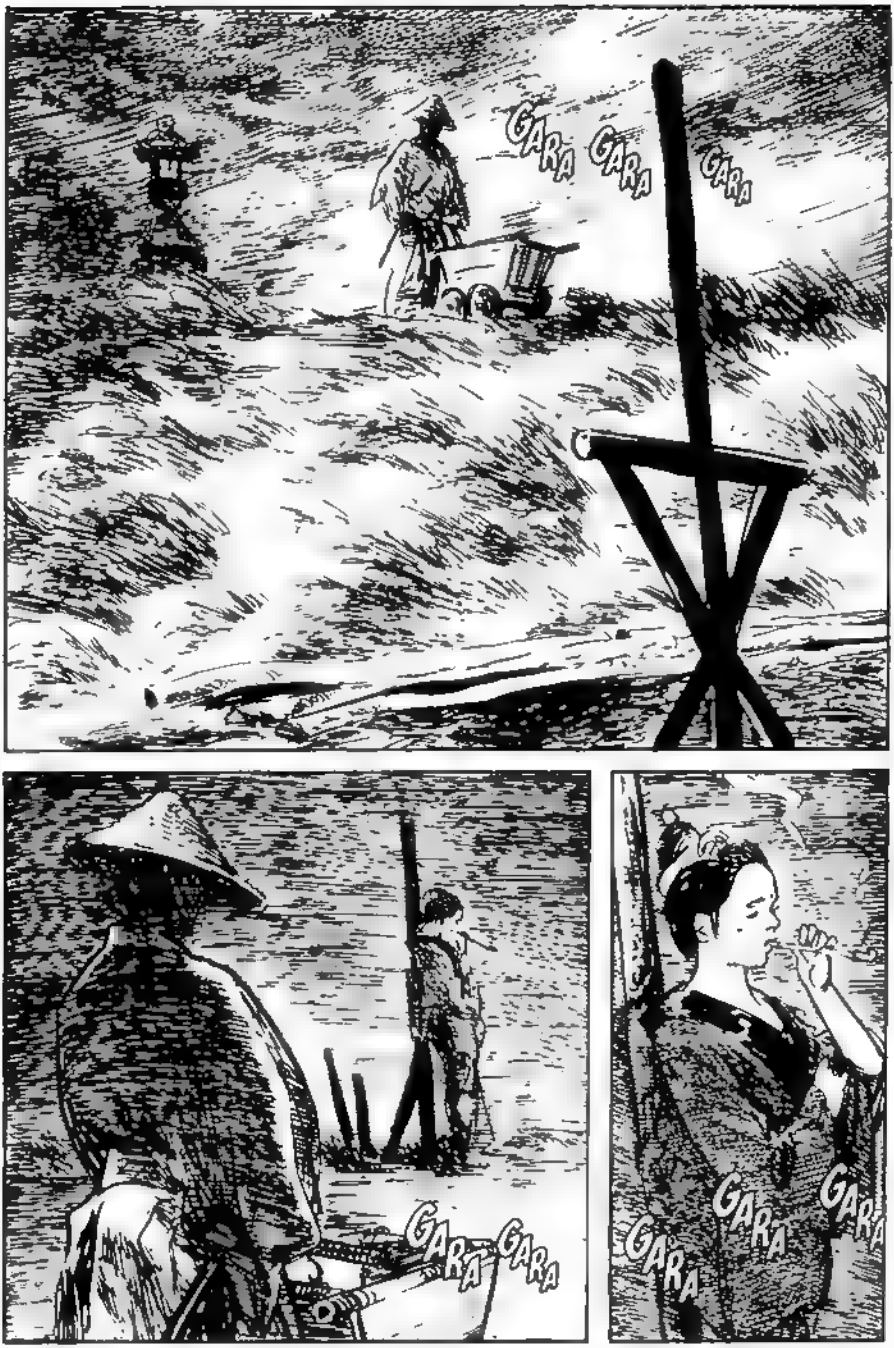
IN MY DAY IT WAS OLD ABE GENMOTSU
ALWAYS UPRIGHT AND MODEST... A STERLING GENTLEMAN WHY WOULD HE HUNT FOR THE YAGYŪ..?
GARA GARA GARA
IT'S BEEN FOUR DAYS SINCE WE SET FOOT IN EDO, AND THE YAGYŪ HAVEN'T YET STRUCK. THEY FEAR A DISTURBANCE...?
PERHAPS. AND YET, THAT IS UNLIKE RETSUDŌ NO, THE KUCHIYAKU MUST BE OUR NEW ENEMY
GARA GARA GARA
...AND THEN THE YAGYŪ.

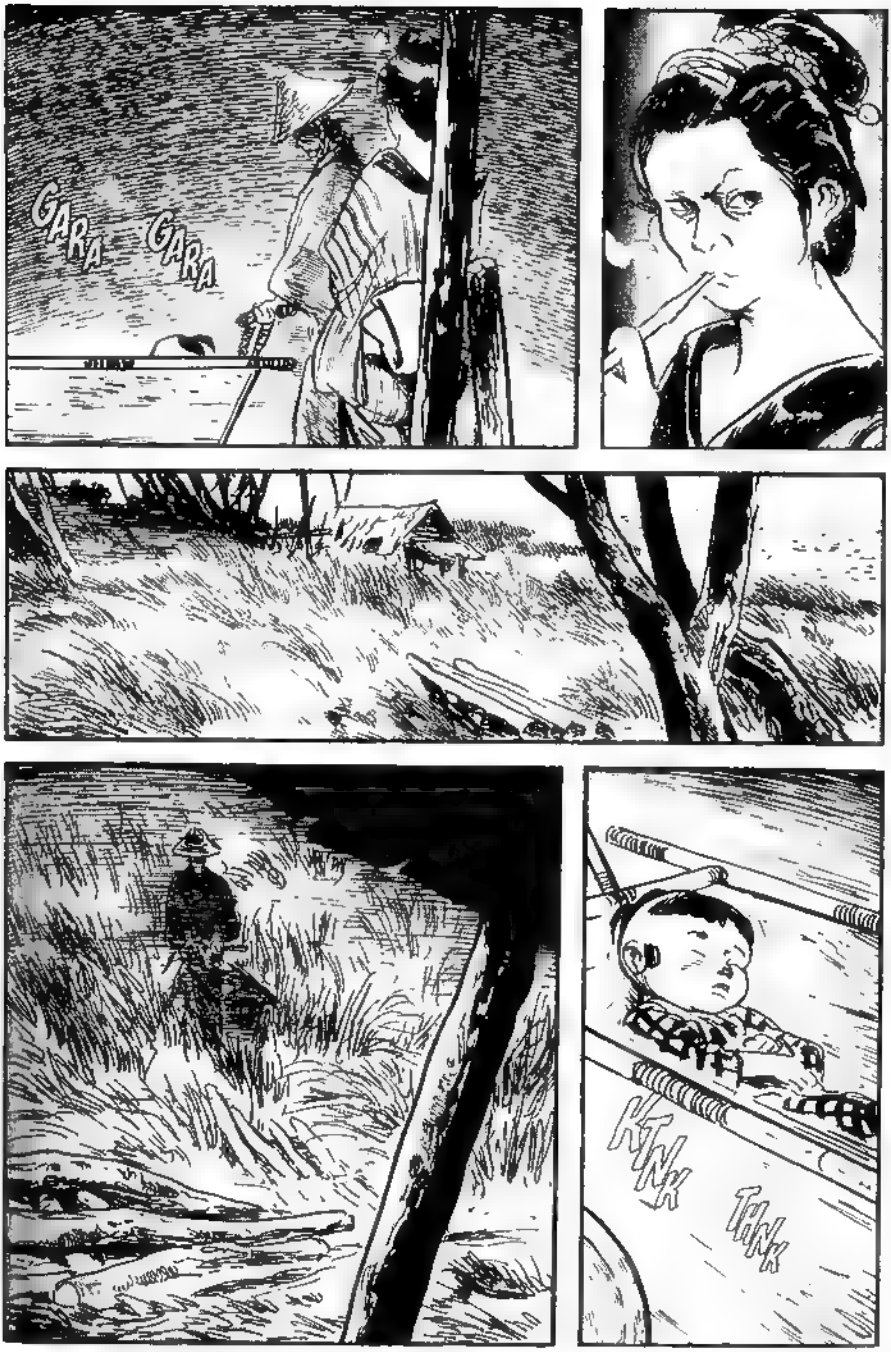
YOU FOOLS!!
YOU LOST LONE WOLF?!
F-FORGIVE US, SIR! WE WERE S-SO SCARED. WE WERE PETRIFIED!

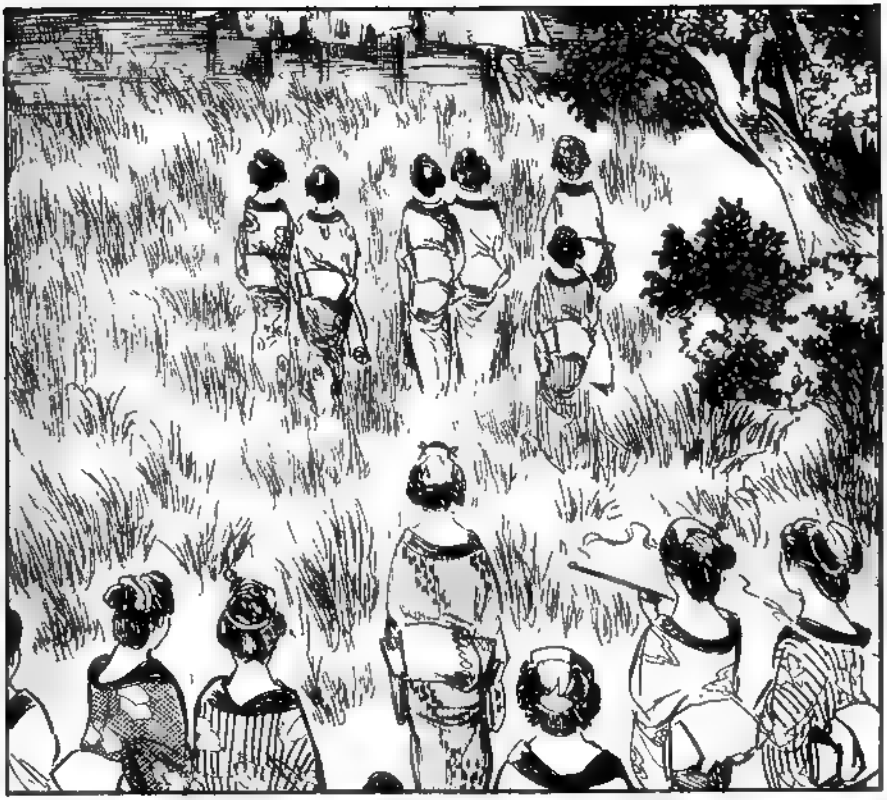
WE COULDN'T FOLLOW HIM...
M-M-MERCY, SIR ! MERCY!!
HAH! IT'S NOTHING! SIGHTING HIM IS PRIZE ENOUGH FOR NOW!
GET ME A MAP!!

YOUR SHOP'S *WHERE* ON SANYA-BORI..?
A ABOUT A *CHO* FROM IMADO BRIDGE.
SO. *HERE*. . . . .
WHICH WAY DID HE *GO*?!
AWAY FROM THE BRIDGE, SIR.
HRM.
EVERY GREENGROCER, FISHMONGER, AND RICE DEALER FROM IMADO TO SHIN-YOSHIWARA'S SEARCHING THE SANYA-BORI, SIR.
YOU!! COME!!
CONTACT "SILK SPIDER" O-TOSHI!

HAVE HER NIGHTHAWKS SWEEP THE WEST BANK OF THE SUMIDA.
AND ALONG NIHONZUTSUMI AND THE HORIKAWA FROM SHITAYA.
YES, MY LORD
BWEH HEH HEH. THIS TIME YOU'VE FLOWN INTO MY WEB, LONE WOLF!
BWA HA HA HA!!


GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA


GARA GARA
KINK
TINK



FHWAM
IBM

WHAT THE FUCK?!
HEY, THIS IS OUR TURF! WE WORK IN THIS SHACK!
DAMN SQUATTER!
I REGRET THE OFFENSE.

REGRET?! YOU THINK THAT SETTLES IT?!
DON'T GET OFF SAYING SORRY!
YOU GOTTA PAY UP SOME RENT!
STOP SQUAWLING! YOU SOUND LIKE CATS IN HEAT!
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
HE'S SQUATTING IN OUR SHACK!

LET HIM BE.
HE'S GOT A KID WE HELP EACH OTHER WHEN WE'RE DOWN AND OUT, RIGHT?
WE DON'T NEED IT NOW, ANYWAY
IT'S OKAY, GO-RŌNIN-SAMA
REST UP IF YOU LIKE
AWW, DID WE WAKE YOU UP, CUTIE. ?

I'M SORRY!
LET'S YOU AND AUNTIE BE FRIENDS... MM?
KLAPP
KLAPP
KLAPP

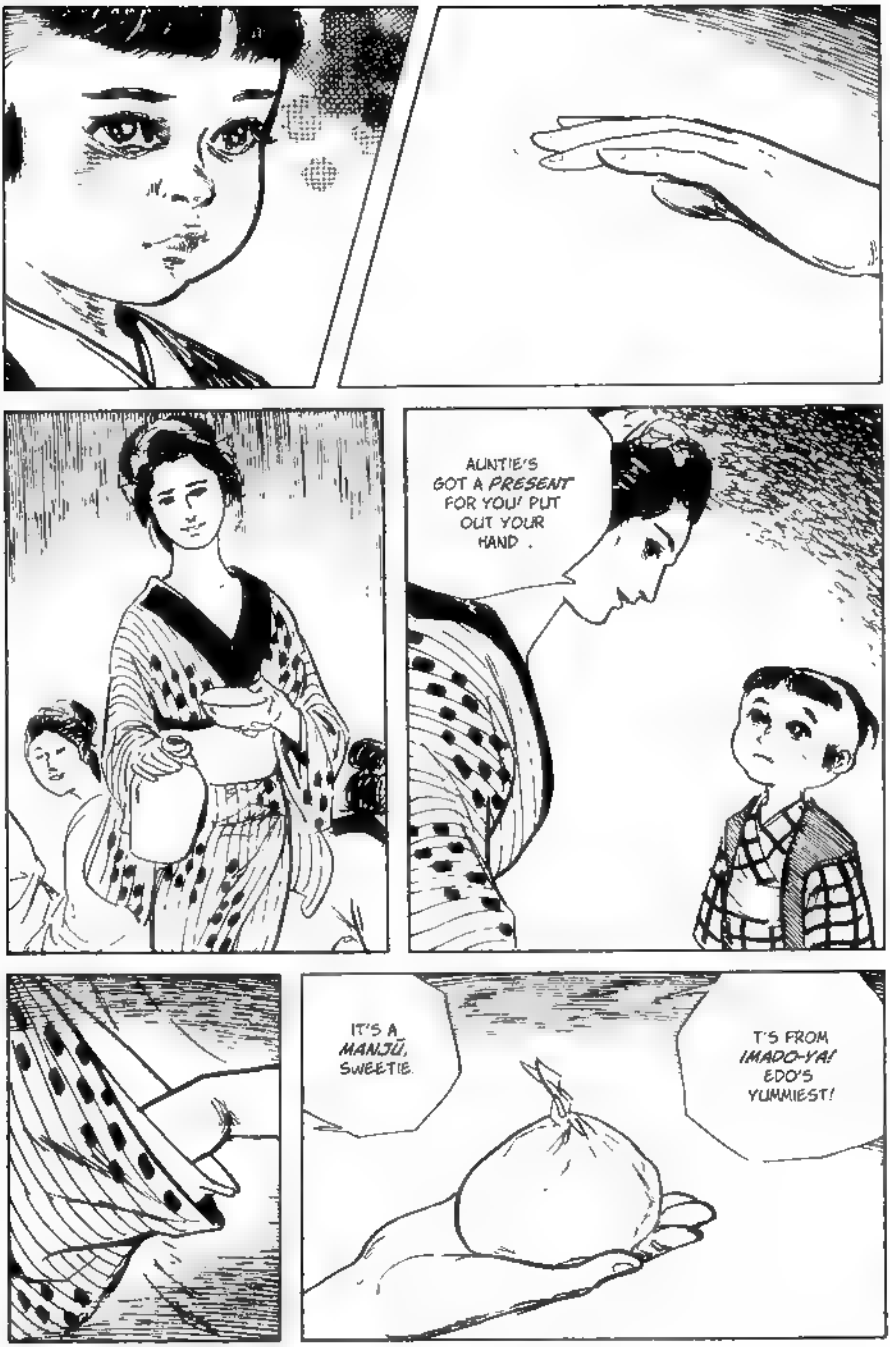
FROM THE DAY SHE LEFT SENJU...
KORASHO!

TO MAKI-NO-NO!
KORASHO!
KORASHO!

SHE DIDN'T TOUCH A BOAT POLE NOR A TILLER!
KORAKIO!
KORAKIO!
THAT CHEATING LITTLE SPARROW!
KORAKIO!
GAVE AWAY HER SWEET PLUMS!
KORAKIO!

AND MADE THE NEIGHBOR'S PEACHES FLOWER!
KORA'SHO!
KORA'SHO!

HERE, LITTLE BOY!
COME ON!


AUNTIE'S GOT A *PRESENT* FOR YOU! PUT OUT YOUR HAND.
IT'S A *MANJŪ*, SWEETIE.
IT'S FROM *IMADO-YA!* EDO'S YUMMIEST!

OH, SO SOFT AND SO SWEET! YOU'LL LOVE IT!
MM. ? WANT IT?
COME ON... TAKE IT
WHAT? DON'T LIKE IT?
OR YOU NEVER HAD ONE BEFORE?
SEE? FULL OF ANKO! IT'S SO DELICIOUS!

I..
I DON'T
YOUR SON DOESN'T
LIKE MANJŪ ..?

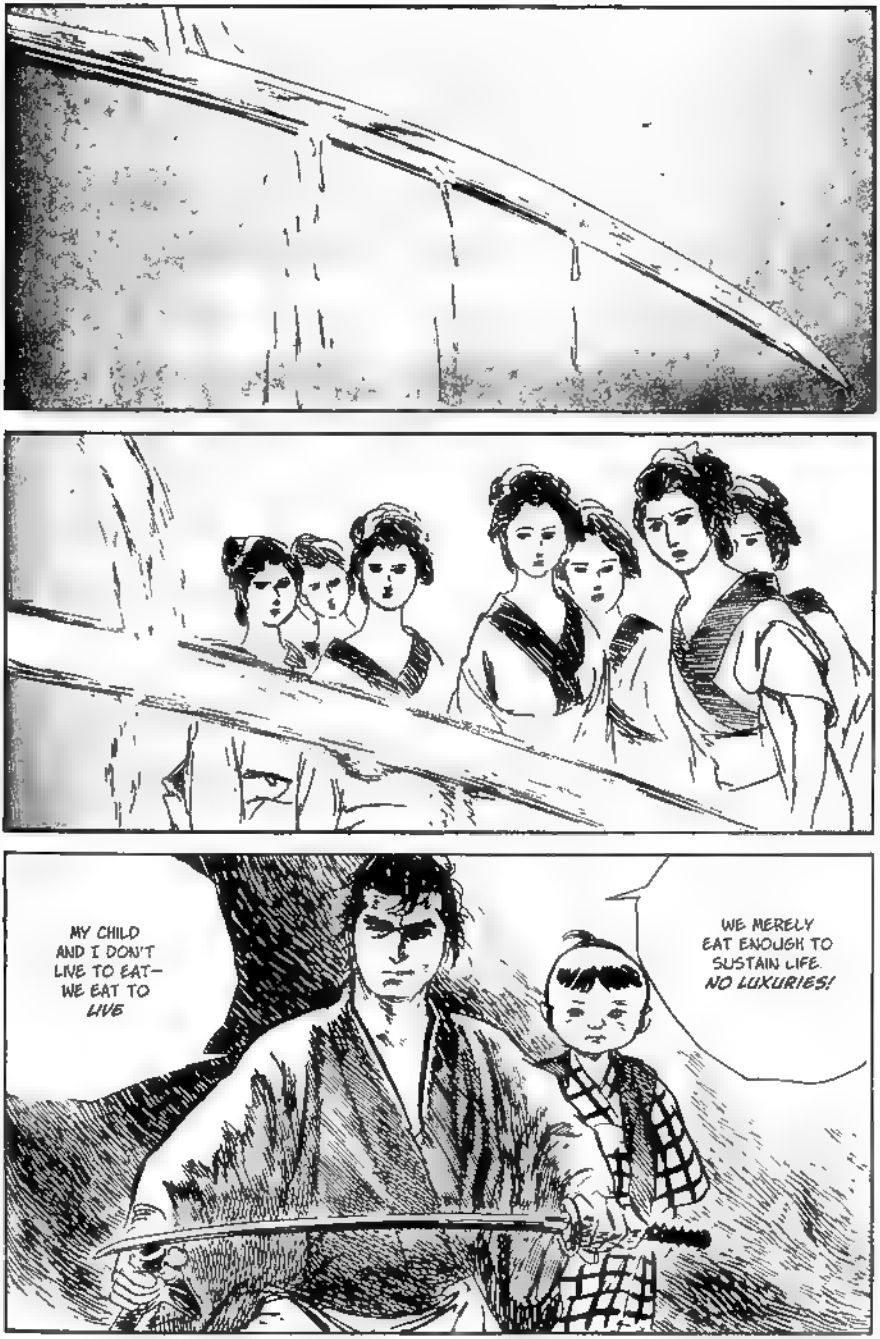
THEN. HAVE A CUP, GO-RŌNIN-SAN.
SOMETIMES EVEN WE NIGHTHAWKS HAVE TO DROWN OUR SORROWS.
THINK OF HOME, OLD LOVERS... A FALLEN WOMAN HAS ONLY HER TEARS, MM?
PLEASE. DOWN ONE WITH ME.
I DON'T DRINK. BUT I HONOR THE SPIRIT

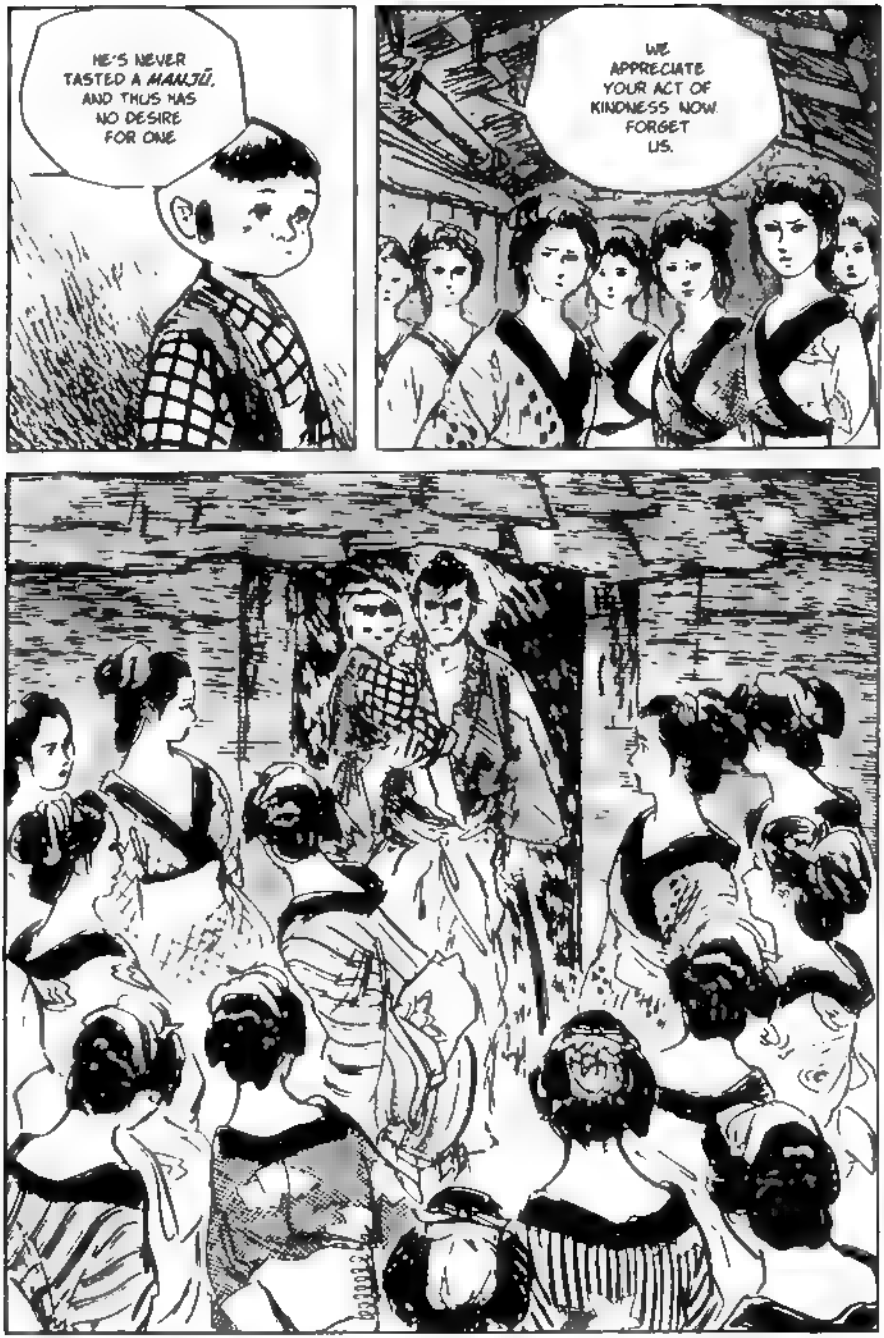
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR SHIT!!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU TWO?! YOUR BRAT WON'T EAT MY MANJŪ, AND DADDY'S SO HIGH AND MIGHTY HE WON'T EVEN DRINK? OR .JUST NOT WITH ME?!
IS THAT IT? EVEN BEGGAR SAMURAI DON'T DRINK WITH NIGHTHAWKS?!

I TOLD YOU NOT TO WASTE ANY SYMPATHY ON HIM!
WE SHOULD'A JUST SHAKEN HIM DOWN!
WELL, YOU'RE DAMN WELL GONNA DRINK!
AND YOUR KID'S GONNA EAT MY MANJŪ! WE'RE BEING NICE TO YOU, DAMN IT!

I'LL DRINK.
AH...PY
GEK!!
WHY YOU-

I'M NOT ALLOWED ALCOHOL
BUT IF YOU THINK ME A SAMURAI, I'LL DRINK LIKE A SAMURAI.


MY CHILD AND I DON'T LIVE TO EAT— WE EAT TO *LIVE*
WE MERELY EAT ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN LIFE. *NO LUXURIES!*

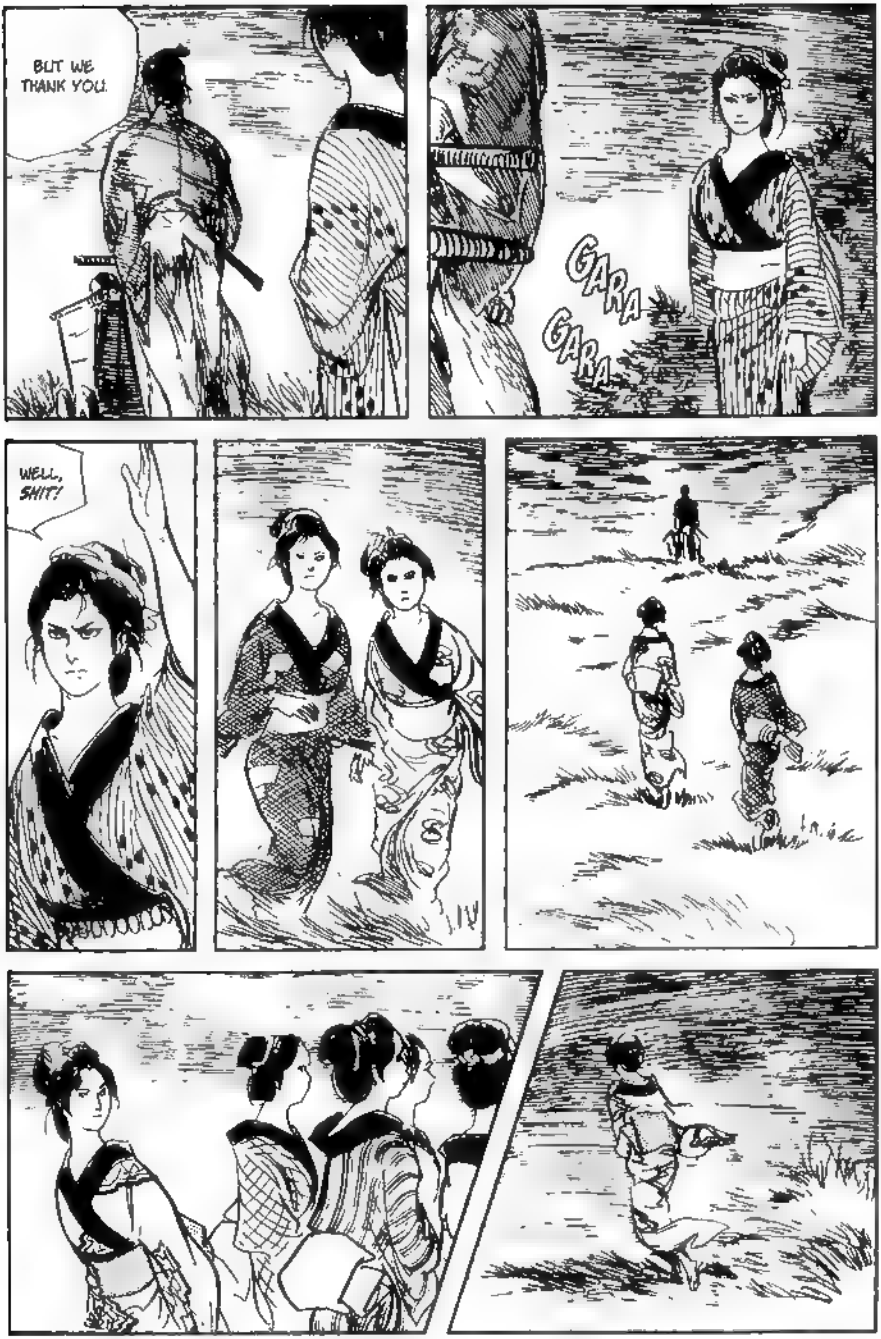

HE'S NEVER TASTED A MANJŪ, AND THUS HAS NO DESIRE FOR ONE
WE APPRECIATE YOUR ACT OF KINDNESS NOW. FORGET US.

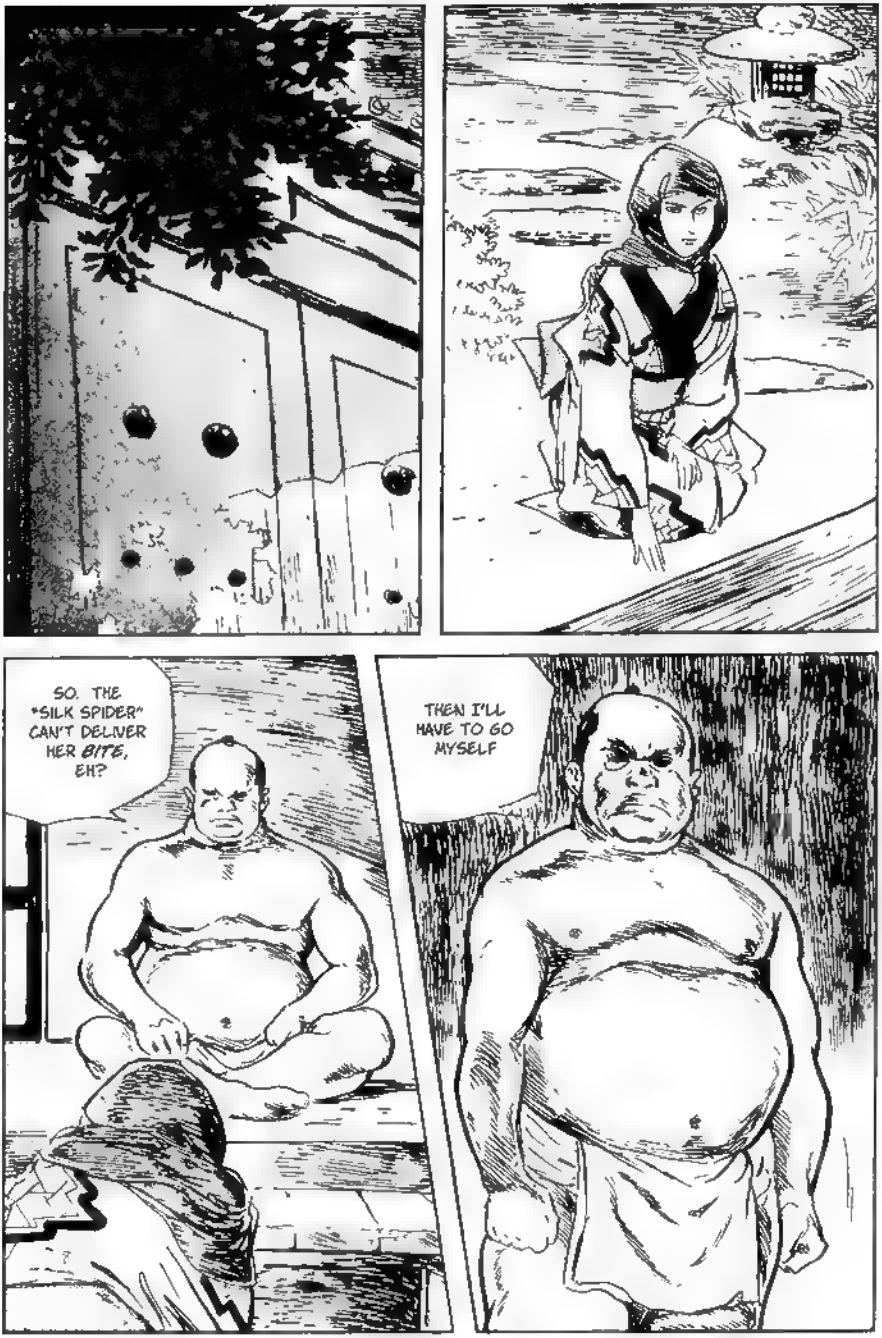
GO-RŌNIN-SAN!
GARA GARA
YOU'RE LONE WOLF AND CUB... AREN'T YOU?
I, I KNEW IT!
I SHOULDN'T GET INVOLVED, BUT THE LAW'S AFTER YOU!
POSTERS EVERYWHERE!

GARA
GARA
WAIT! PLEASE!
IT'S DANGEROUS OUT THERE!
EDO'S CRAWLING WITH COPS!
HOW ABOUT THIS. STAY WITH US NIGHTHAWKS!
WE'LL SHELTER YOU. FEED YOU, EVEN!

YOU NEED SOME PLACE TO STAY, NO?
SO, WE TRADE! YOU CAN BE OUR BODYGUARD
IT'S TOUGH OUT HERE. CREEPY JOHNS, ALL THOSE CHEAP HOODS
WELL ?

THE BRANCHES INTERTWINE, FLOWERING WITH ALL THEIR STRENGTH IN THE TOO SHORT SUMMER.
BUT SOMETIMES THERE'S ONE *BLIGHTED LEAF* A *SINGLE* LEAF THAT WITHERS AN ENTIRE THICKET
IF WE STAYED, *WE* WOULD BE THAT BLIGHTED LEAF, DESTROYING YOU ALL.


BUT WE THANK YOU.
GARA GARA
WELL, SHIT!


SO. THE "SILK SPIDER" CAN'T DELIVER HER *BITE*, EH?
THEN I'LL HAVE TO GO MYSELF

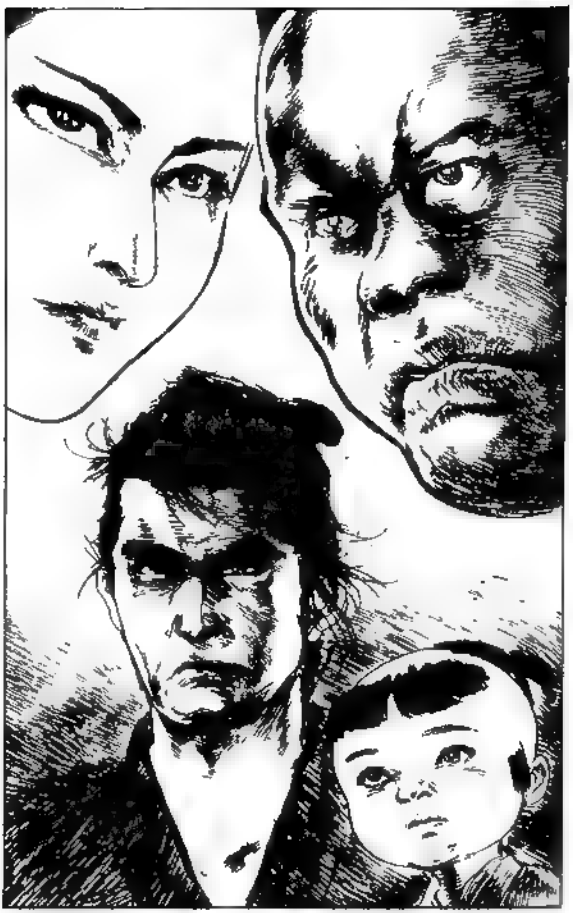
SMAK
IT ITCHES SCRATCH!
NOW SUCK

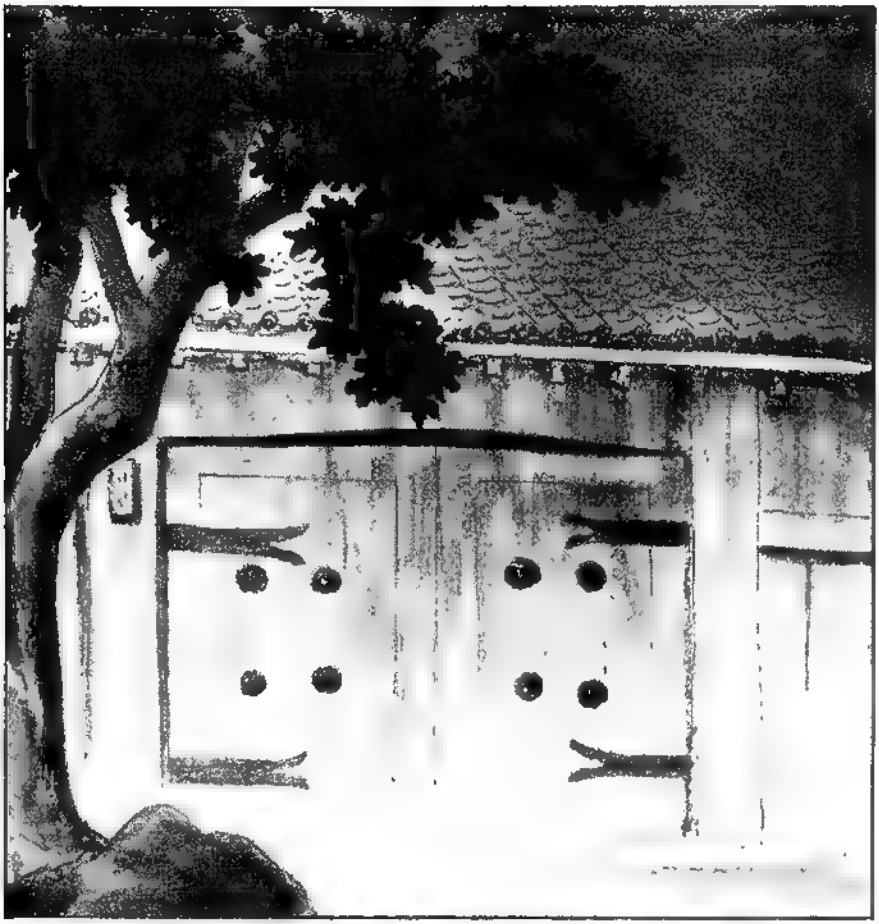
YES...
I'LL HAVE
TO GO
MYSELF...

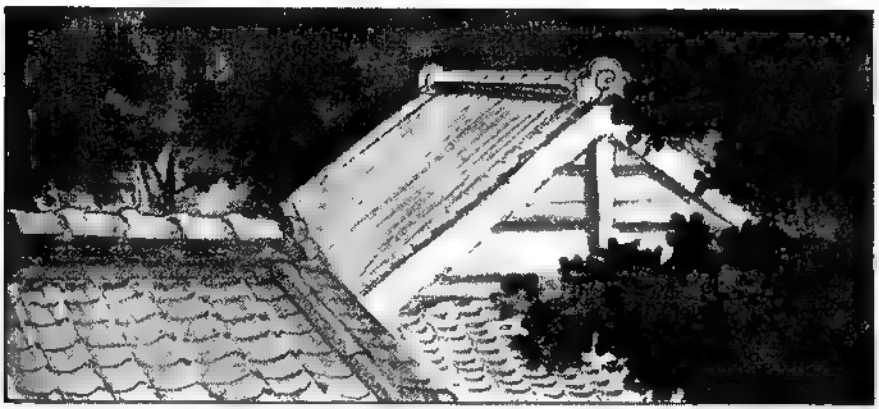
#MangaProject on irc.Dal.net
Lone Wolf and Cub

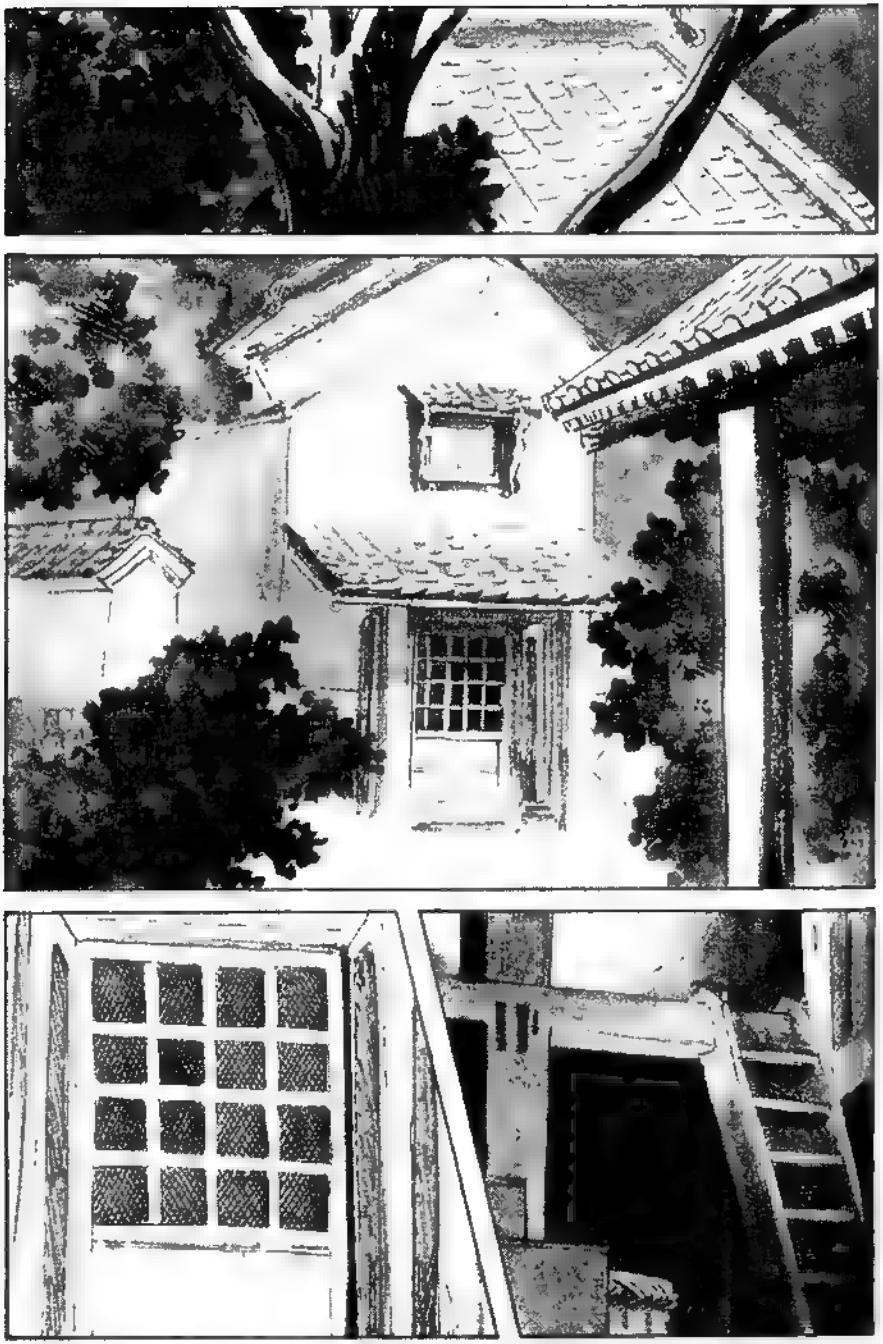
the hundred and first

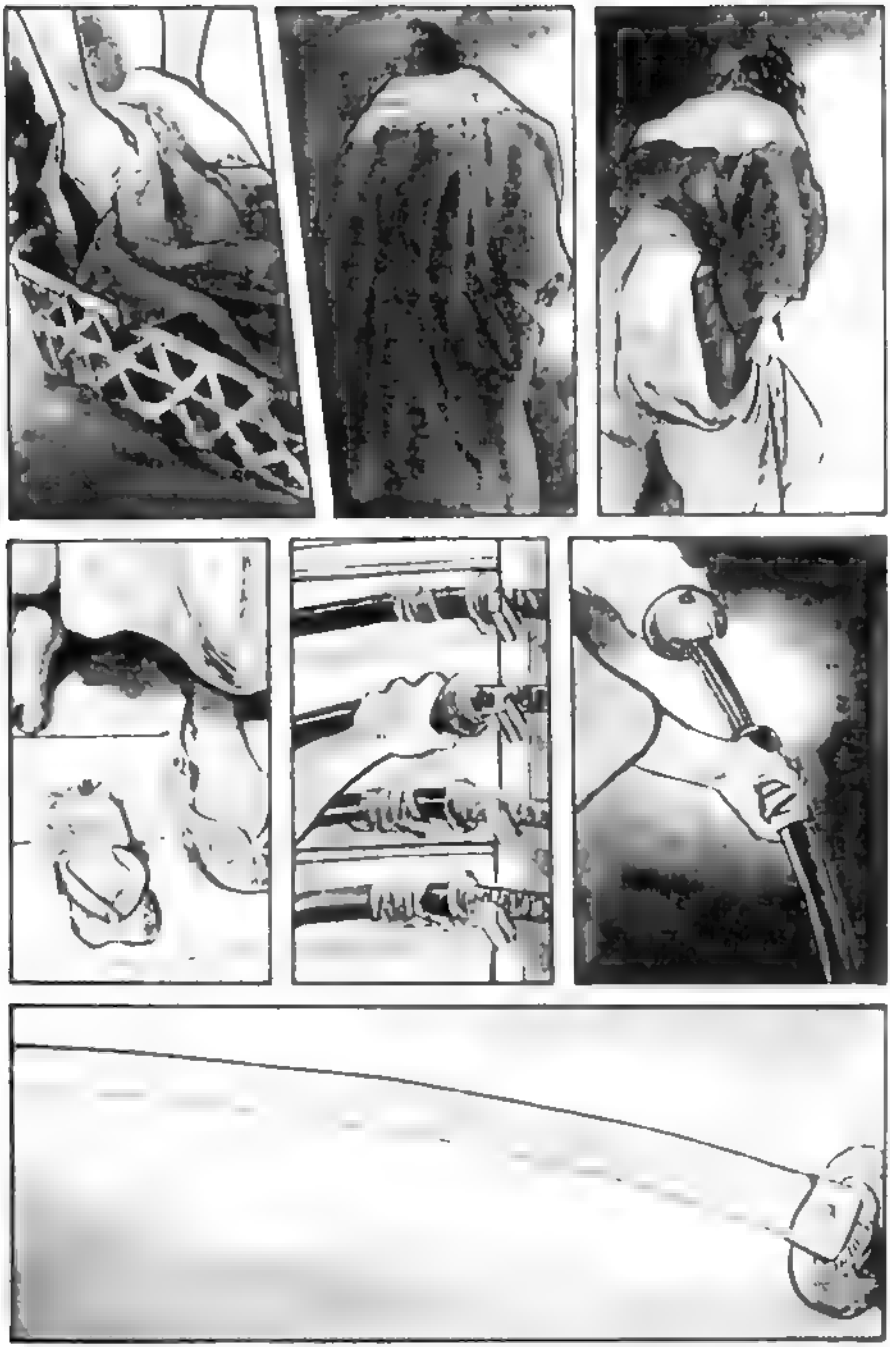
Abe-No-Kaii

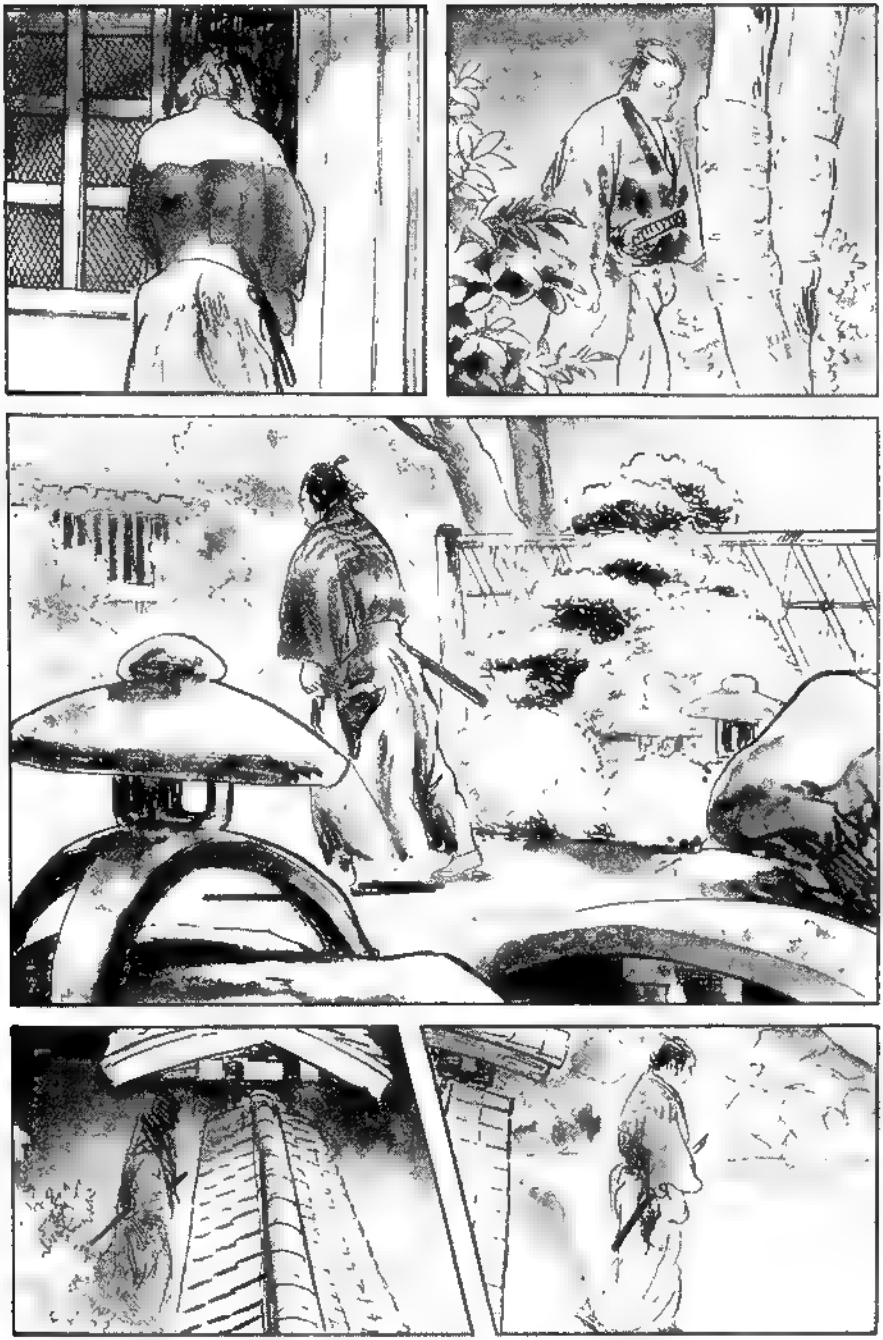


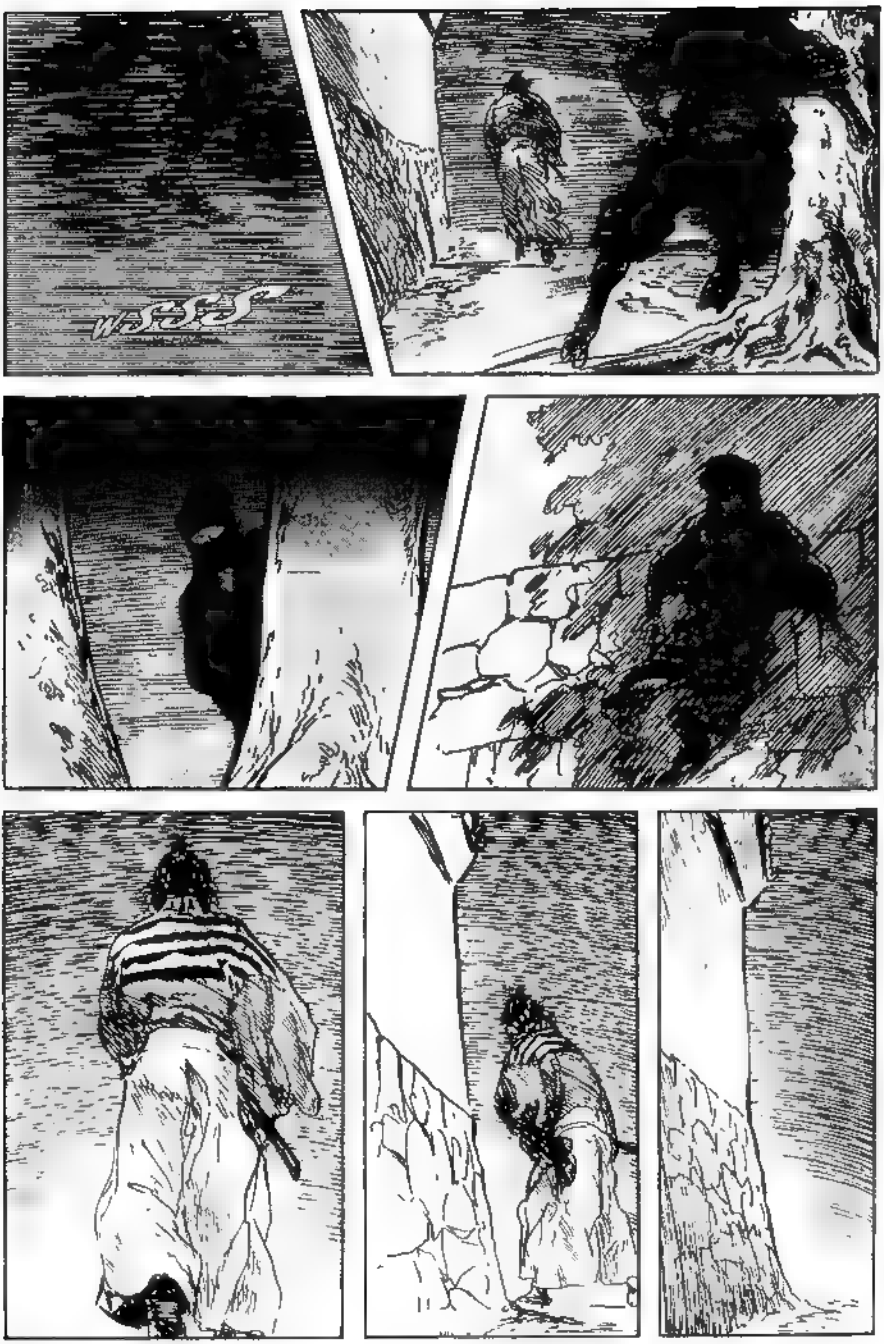


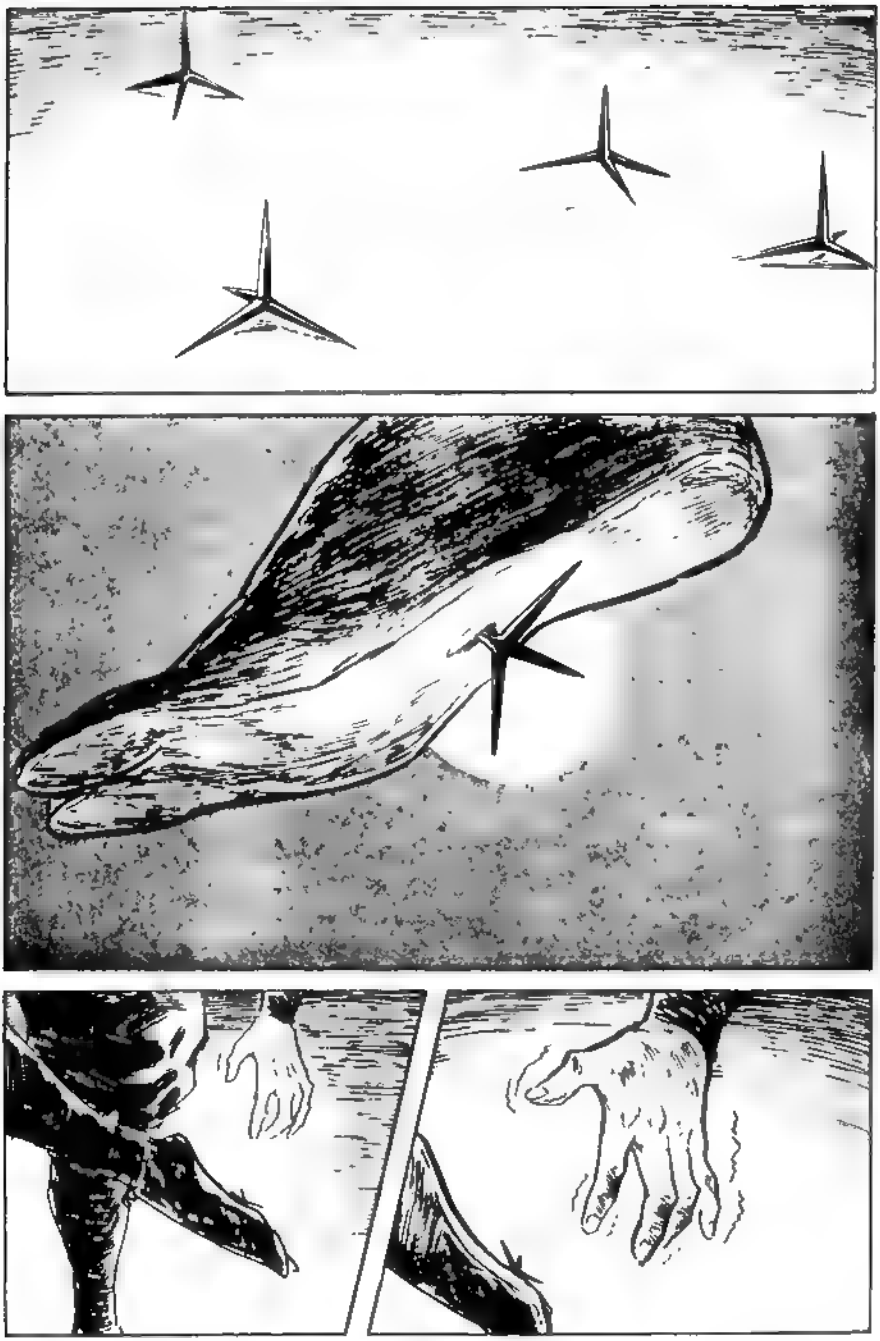










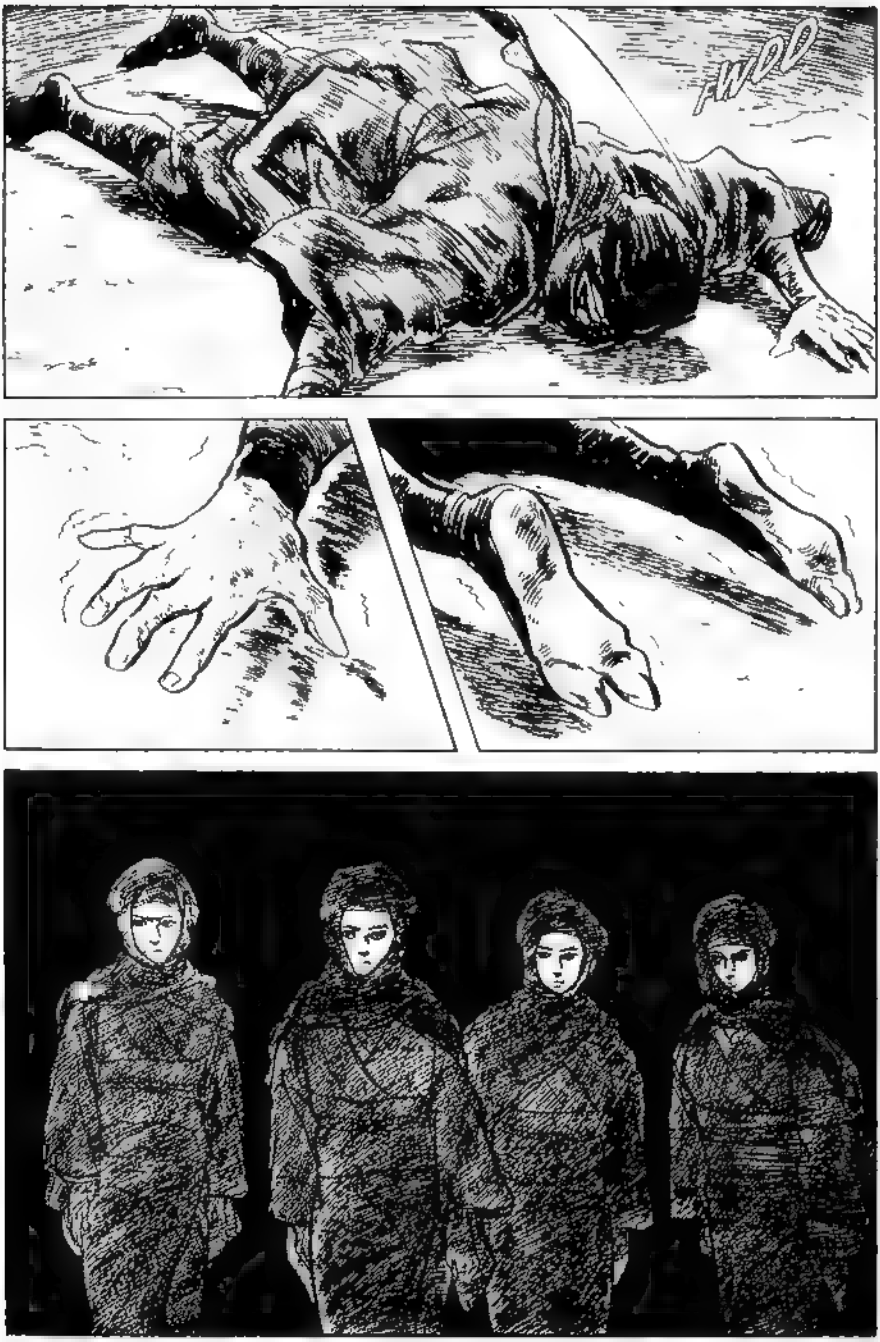


NNG . !
HNNG

C-CAN'T MOVE...
GOING NUMB...
BWEH HEH HEH HEH!
NNK KRKK!

CAN'T MOVE, CAN'T JUMP
EH, MY YAGYŪ LAPDOG?
IF YOU THOUGHT MAKIBISHI WERE JUST FOR SHINOBI, BIG MISTAKE ABE-NO-KAII LIKES THEM, TOO.
MAYBE I'M NOT AS AGILE AS YOU NINJA.
BUT MY TOYS ARE MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE. IT'S THE VIPER VENOM, YOU SEE?
JUST A SMIDGEN IN THE BLOOD, AND YOU'RE ALL NUMB, RIGHT? CAN'T EVEN WAGGLE YOUR TONGUE! HEH HEH.

HAH! I SAW THROUGH RETSUDŌ AGES AGO! HE FIGURED LONE WOLF AND I WOULD FIGHT IT OUT, AND HE'D KILL THE VICTOR THAT'S WHY YOU'RE TAILING ME, EH?
I'VE BEEN LETTING YOU RUN LOOSE SO RETSUDŌ WOULD THINK I FELL FOR IT. "CATCH THE SHARKS WHILE THEY FIGHT," HE THINKS. BUT THINK AGAIN, OLD MAN!
BWA HA HA! THE INVINCIBLE YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ, AFRAID OF ME! BUT HE'S RIGHT! HE SHOULD BE!
AFTER I BURY THE WOLF, HEH HEH.
...I BURY HIM, LAST OF THE YAGYŪ!
THEN THE POWER OF THE SHŌGUNATE, IN MY HANDS!


AWOO

ENSLAVE HIM TO AFUYŌ!
HE'S A TRAINED SHINOBI, SO KEEP HIM PARALYZED

THEY SAY YOU GUYS RIP UP YOUR FACES AND DIE WHEN YOU'RE CAUGHT, KEEPING YOUR IDENTITY SECRET TO THE LAST
TOO BAD YOU'RE PARALYZED!
AND AFTER SMOKING MY SPECIAL KIZAMI YOU'LL TAKE ORDERS LIKE A DOG!
BWEH HEH HEH. A SHINOBI'S TRAINING JERSUS AFUYŌ NO CONTEST!
THEN I'LL USE HIM TO MANIPULATE THAT CURSED RETSUDŌ!

DAMMIT IF *HE* WON'T DRINK, AND HIS KID WON'T EVEN EAT *MANJŪ*, HOW CAN I *POISON* THEM?
FACE IT— YOU HAVE *FAILED*, O-TOSHI!

IT'S ME.
G-GOZEN-SAMA!

:PHEWW: HAVEN'T WALKED LIKE THAT IN AGES.
SIR. THOSE CLOTHES ...?

FROM NOW ON I RUN THE SHOW. HE'S TOO TOUGH FOR YOU.

I... I HAVE NO EXCUSE, MY LORD..
SO. LONE WOLF AND CUB?
I HAVE THE NIGHTHAWKS TAILING HIM. THERE SHOULD BE A REPORT SOON..
HE. HE'S STILL HEADED DOWNRIVER!
I THINK HE'S GONNA WALK ALL NIGHT!

SHALL WE TRY A TRAP. .?
WHAT HAPPENS IF WE SCATTER THESE ON A DARK PATH..? HEH HEH..
GOZEN-SAMA! PLEASE LET ME DO IT!
NO. BOTCH IT AGAIN AND HE MIGHT NOTICE.
POISON ONLY WORKS WHEN THE POISONER'S UNKNOWN. KNOW THE POISONER, KNOW HIS POISON
FIND A BOAT! WE'LL CUT HIM OFF!

HEH HEH. HE WON'T DIE *THIS* EASILY. IT'S JUST A *TEST*
WORTH A TRY, THOUGH. SOMETIMES EVEN *PROS* SLIP UP.
BUT NOT EVEN A *WOLF*... NOT IN THE *DARK!*
THE YAGYŪ AND THE KUROKUWA TRIED *EVERY* TRICK.
HE'S NOT *HUMAN*, HE'S A *REAL* WOLF IF A WOLF SNIFFED THE GROUND, IT'D FIND THEM.
EITHER WAY, WE LEARN SOMETHING.
BWEH HEH HEH. NOW IT'S GETTING *ENTERTAINING!*

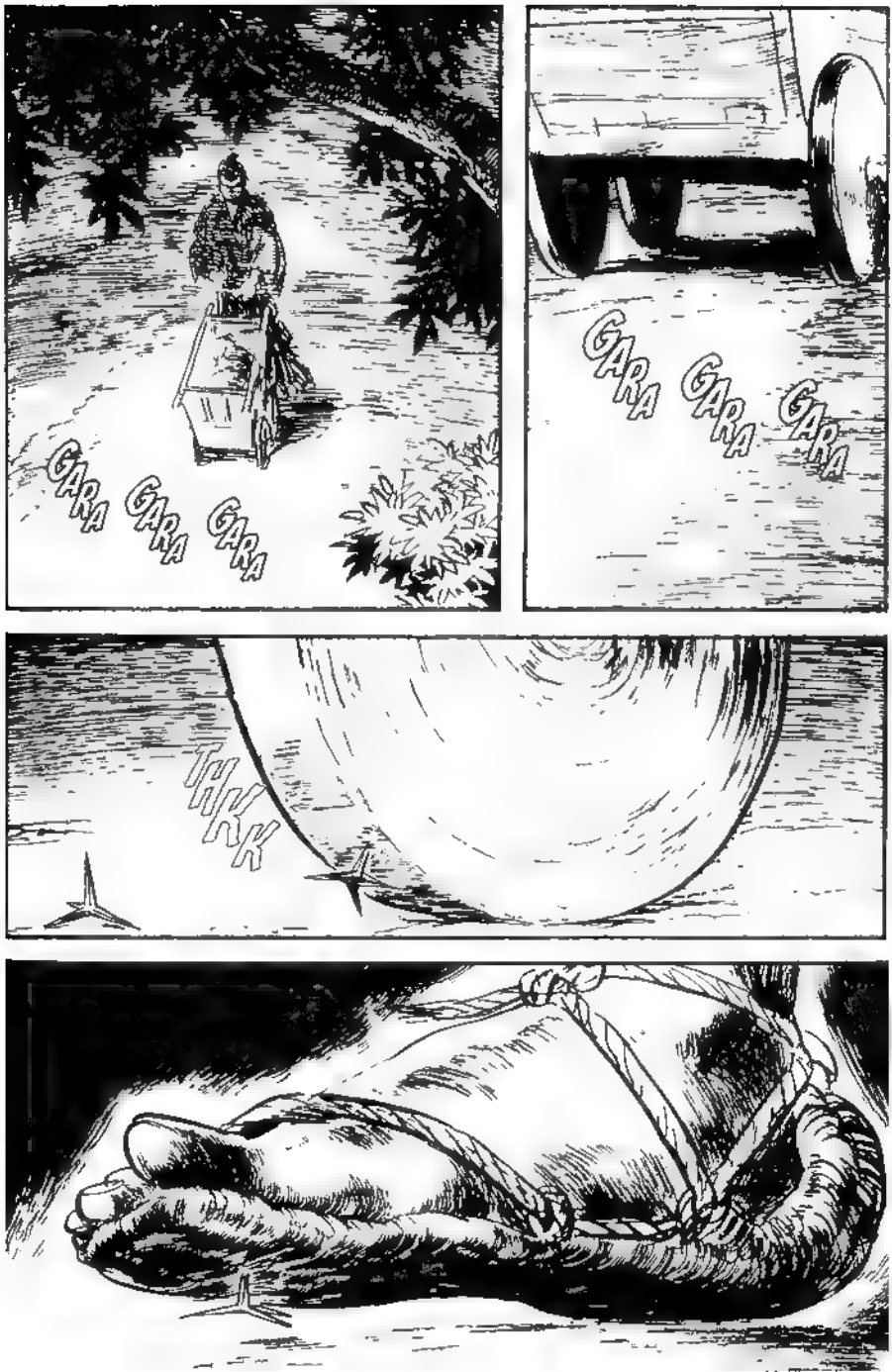
OKAY LET'S PULL OUT
AREN'T WE STAYING TO WATCH ?!
IDIOT! HE'D SENSE US!
HE EVEN SPOTTED THE KUROKUWA NINJA DIDN'T HE?
WE'RE AMATEURS HE'D FEEL US IN AN INSTANT
WE'LL PULL IN DOWNSTREAM CHECK BACK LATER
THINK, WOMAN! DO HUNTERS SIT BY THEIR TRAPS?

GARA GARA GARA
GARA GARA GARA
GARA GARA
GARA GARA GARA

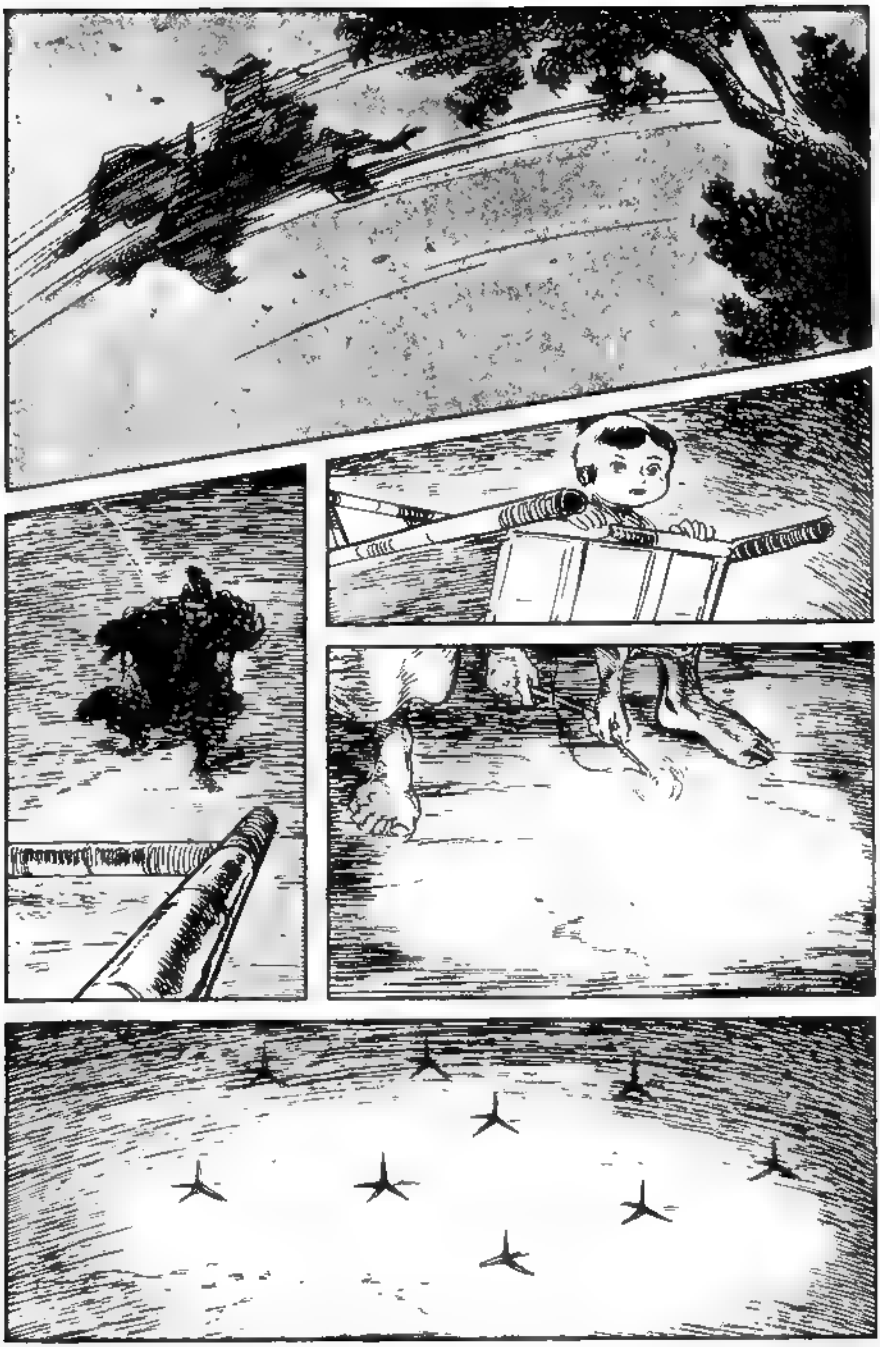
I'M TAKING A NAP
YAWWWN...

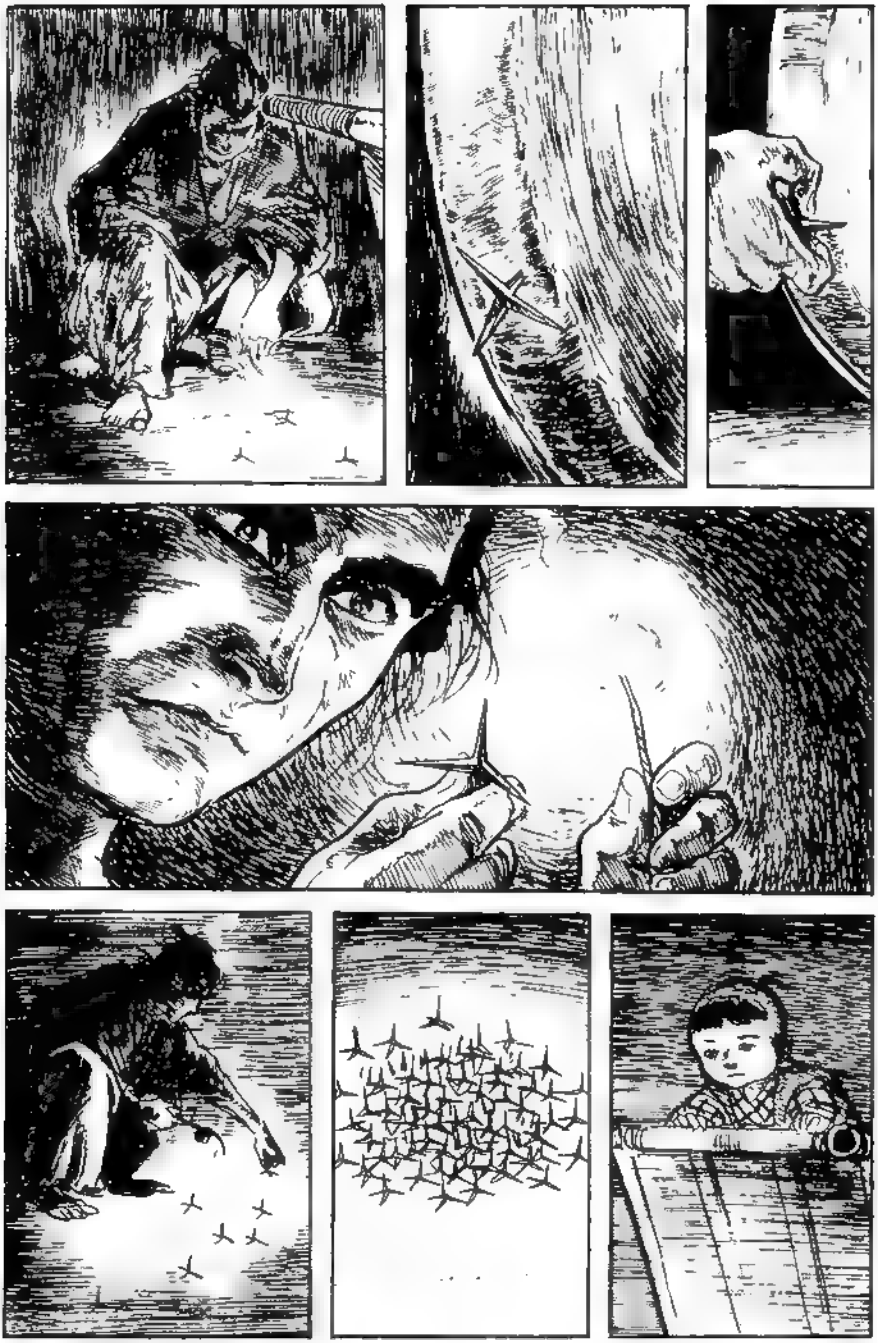
GARA GARA
GARA GARA

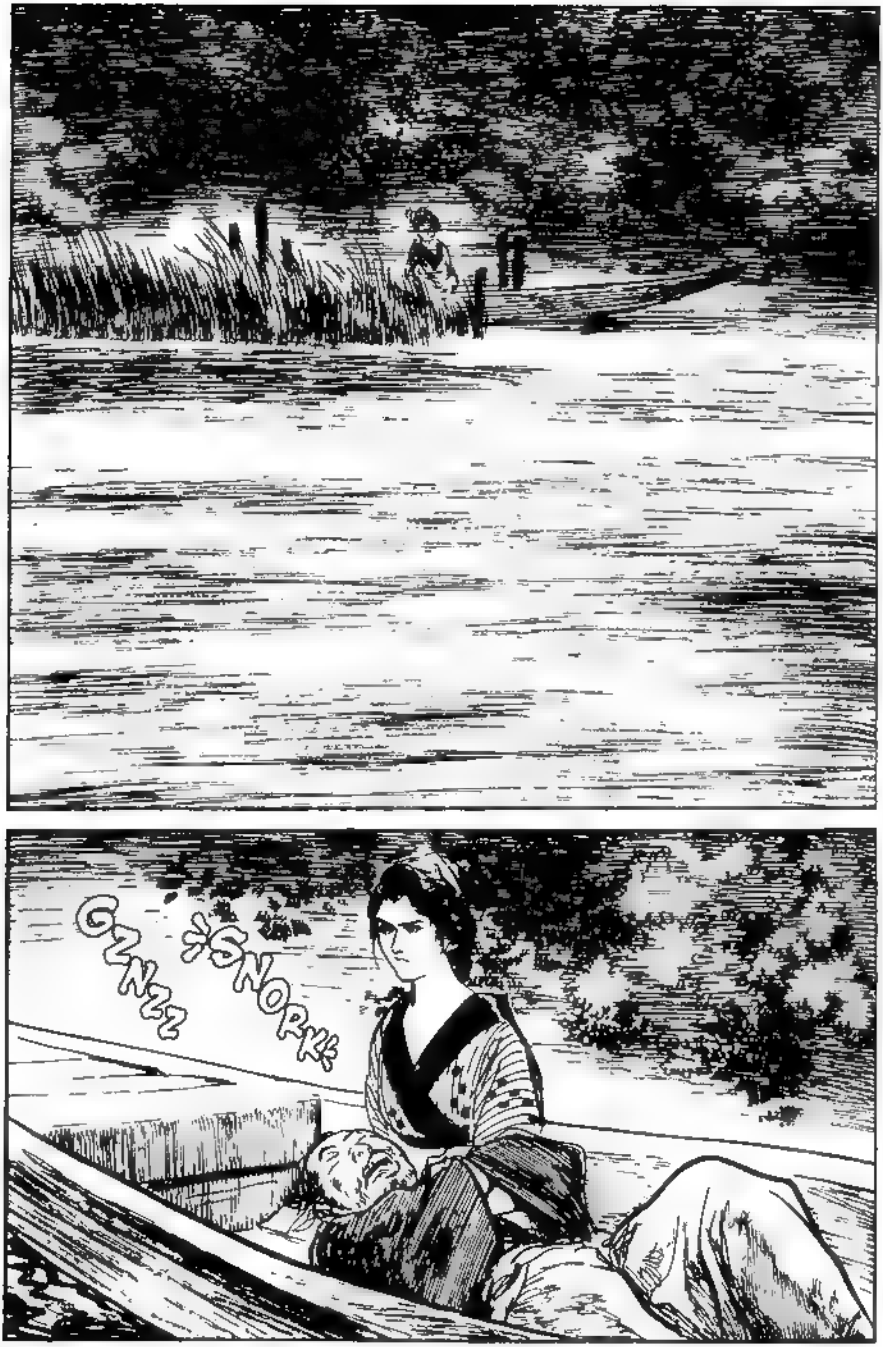
GARA GARA GARA
GARA GARA
GARA
GARA


GARA GARA GARA
GARA GARA GARA
THK

DAIGORO! DON'T MOVE!
STAY IN THE CART!

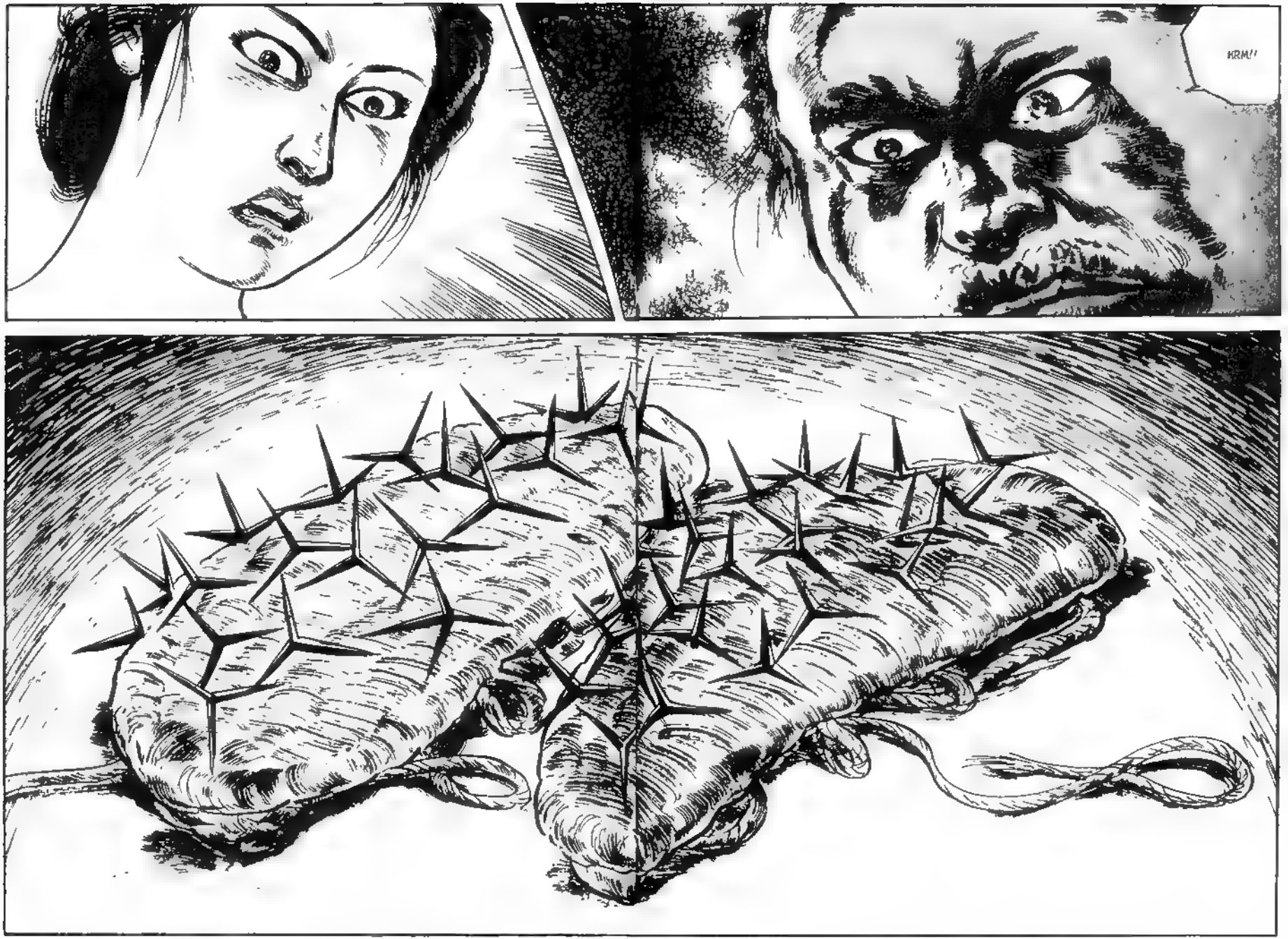





GZNzz
SNORK

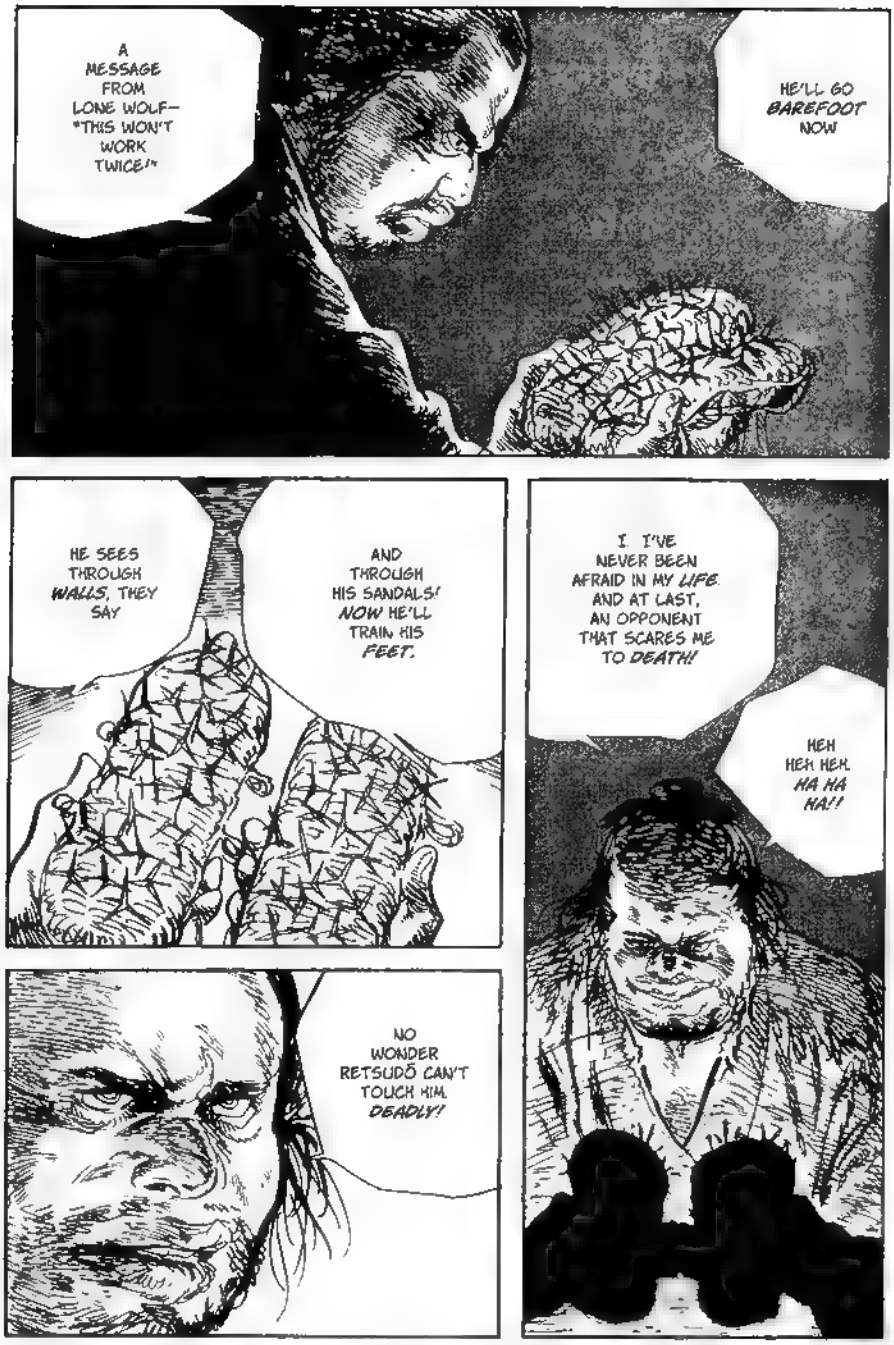
SNZZXX
GZZNRX
mm.
ymm...
GZZNRX
SNORRX
GLAWWW
GZNX...
SNGGK
SNURK

AWWWW!
....
WELL
LET'S GO SEE WHAT WE CAUGHT
KRRR
KRRR


HRM!!

HMM.
. . . .
. . . .
. . . .
HE FELT A WHEE... HIT A MAKIBISHI... THEN, THE INSTANT HE FELT PRESSURE ON HIS SANDALS.

HE LEAPED
UHMM. A WOLF'S REFLEXES. INHUMAN!
BUT THEN, WHY LEAVE THEM?
IT'S A CHALLENGE!


A MESSAGE FROM LONE WOLF— "THIS WON'T WORK TWICE!"
HE'LL GO *BAREFOOT* NOW
HE SEES THROUGH *WALLS*, THEY SAY
AND THROUGH HIS SANDALS! *NOW* HE'LL TRAIN HIS *FEET.*
I. I'VE NEVER BEEN AFRAID IN MY *LIFE.* AND AT LAST, AN OPPONENT THAT SCARES ME TO *DEATH!*
HEH HEH HEH. *HA HA HA!!*
NO WONDER RETSUDŌ CAN'T TOUCH HIM. *DEADLY!*

I LOVE IT! LET ME AT HIM! HEH HEH HEH!
GUHAHAHA HA HA!
DAMN. I'M THIRSTY THE BIG BAD WOLF SCARED ME DRY.
WATER, O-TOSH!
I-I'M SORRY I DIDN'T BRING ANY
NO WELLS OR SPRINGS NEARBY
NOT EVEN A HOUSE...
YOURS WILL DO FINE!

WELL, HURRY UP! IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME!
Y.. YES, MY LORD

NOT YET
NOT YET...?
YOU IDIOT! A GROWN WOMAN WHO CAN'T PEE ON COMMAND?!

ALMOST THERE.
GLP
GLP
GLP
GLP
GLP

SALTY THAT MEANS YOU'RE *TIRED*
GIVES ME AN IDEA. MAN OR WOLF, HE HAS TO *SHIT* AND *PISS*.
SAME WITH HIS *CUB*. DUMPS A LOAD, WIPES HIS BUTT! WE'LL SEND A NIGHTHAWK AHEAD BY BOAT, AND WAIT
WHEN THE CUB LEAVES PAPA WOLF TO DO IT, SHE SIDLES UP ALL FRIENDLY, AND HELPS *WIPE* HIM.

..USING PAPER TREATED WITH THIS!
EVEN IF PAPA WOLF'S WATCHING, IT'S JUST A WORTHLESS NIGHTHAWK. HE WON'T SUSPECT A THING.. HEH, HEH.
THIS POISON IS A FINE POWDER, BUT IT WILL DISSOLVE AND INVADE THE INTESTINES. KILLS HIM DEAD!
I'LL DO IT, MY LORD!
NO, HE'D RECOGNIZE YOU.
LONE WOLF'S CUB... KILLED GOING POTTY!
BWE HEH HEH HEH HEH!

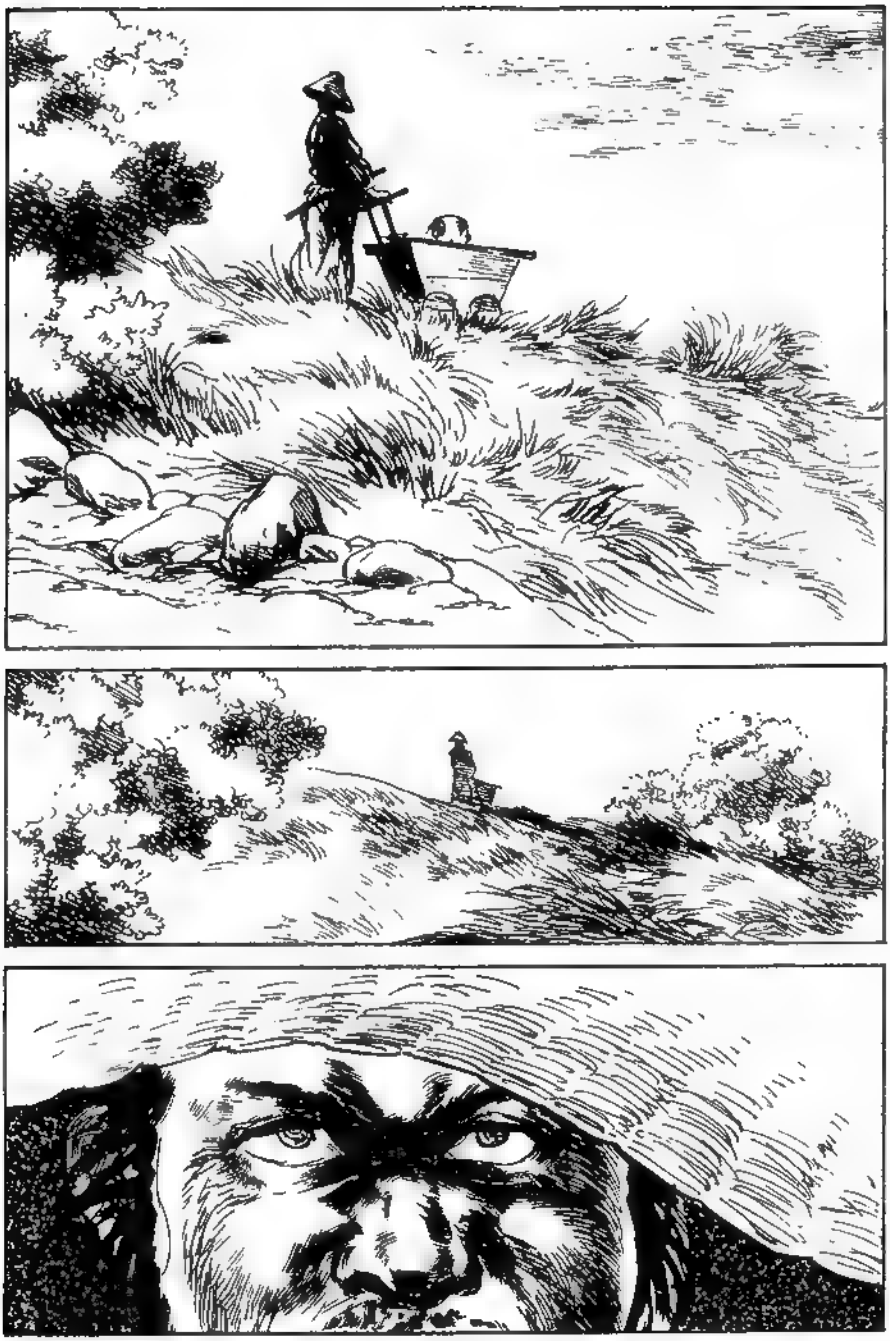
GARA
GARA
GARA

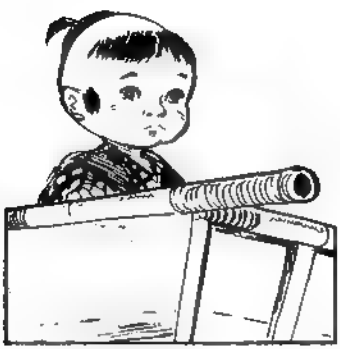
OH! ALREADY OCCUPIED? MIND IF WE SHARE. ? HEE HEE!

UUHNG!
UHNNNGG!

HERE. I'VE GOT SOME PAPER—

I SEE, I SEE. NEVER RELY ON OTHERS! HEH, HEH...
BUT THAT'S FINE. WHY RUSH IT WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN, EH?
AND MORE TO COME.
DAMN!





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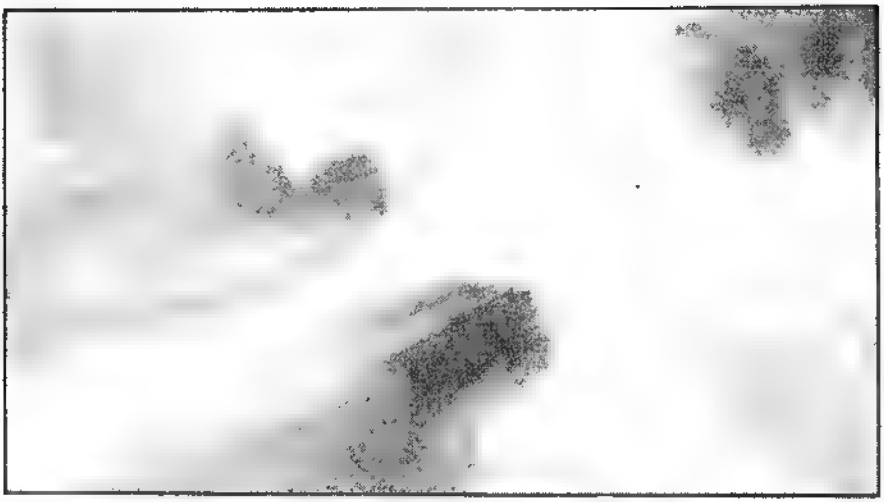
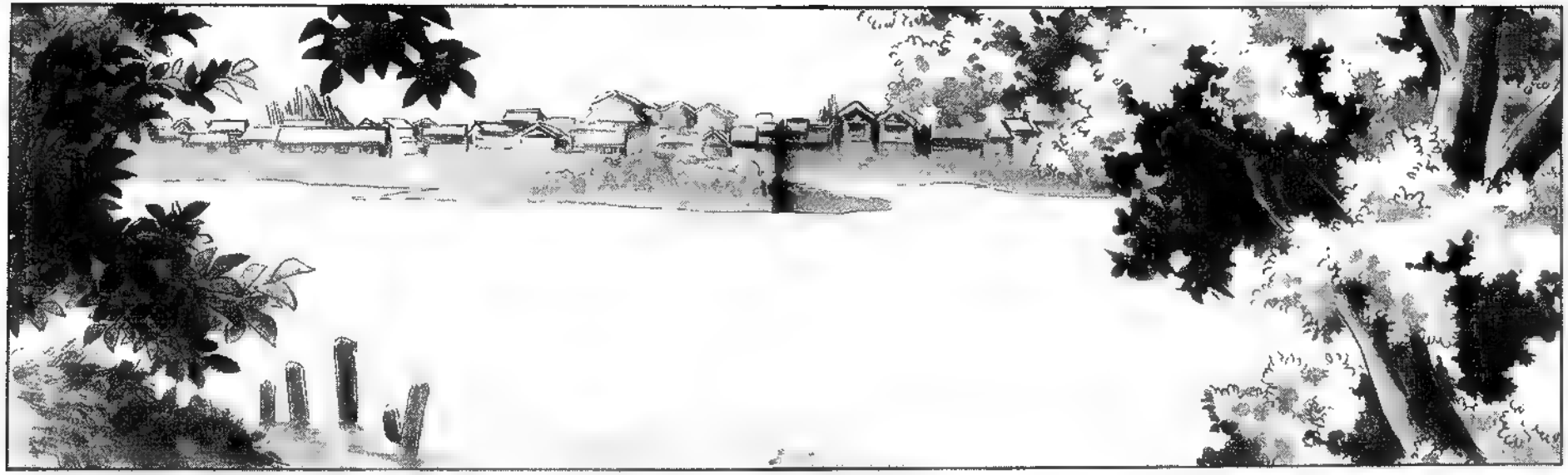
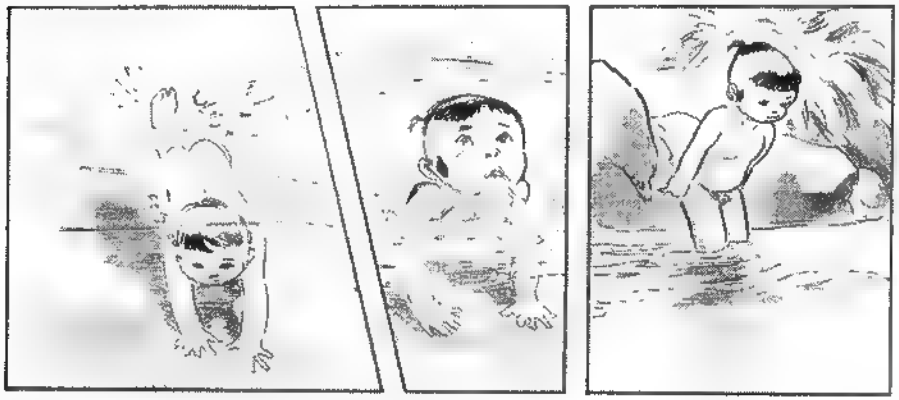
Lone Wolf and Cub

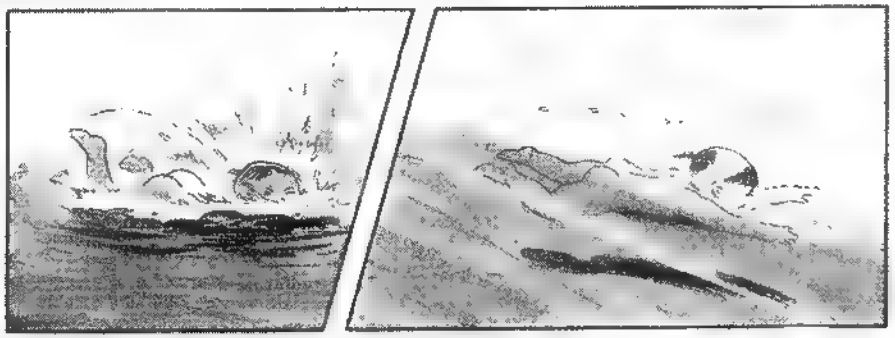
the hundred and second

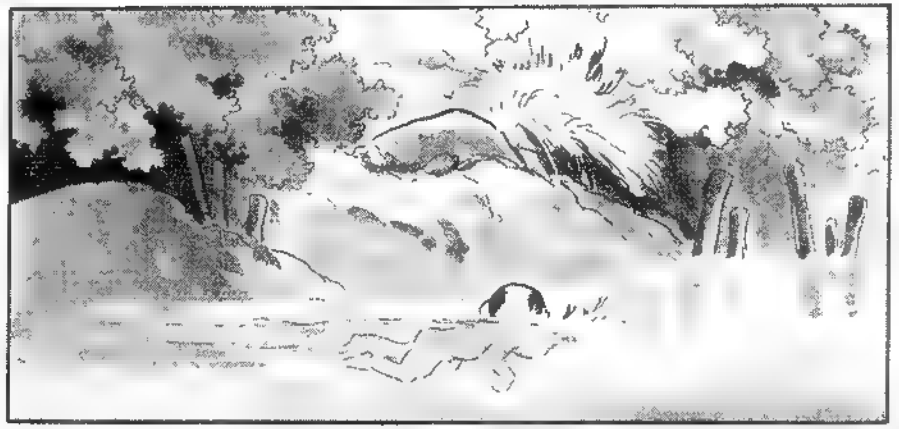
A Taste of Poison

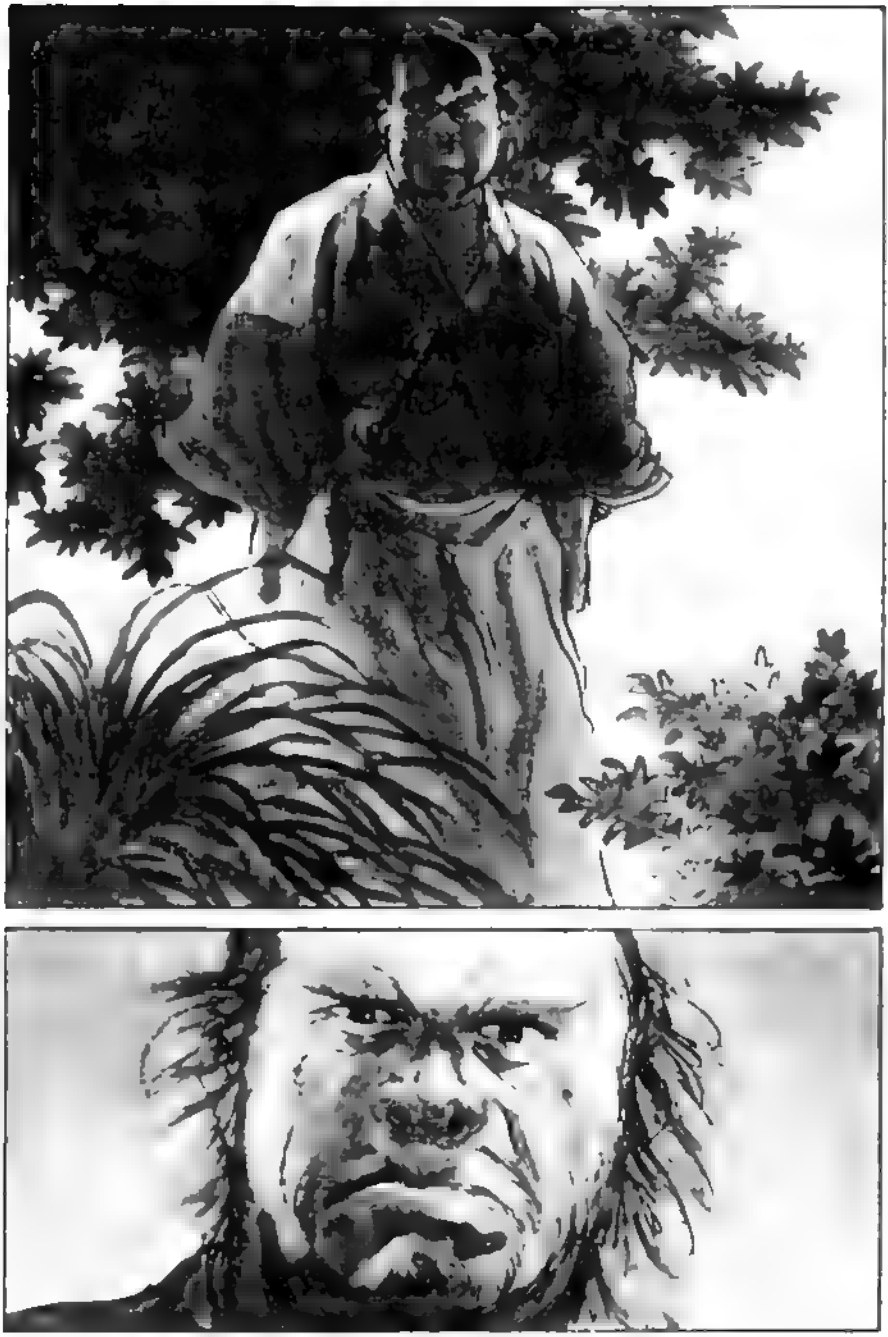


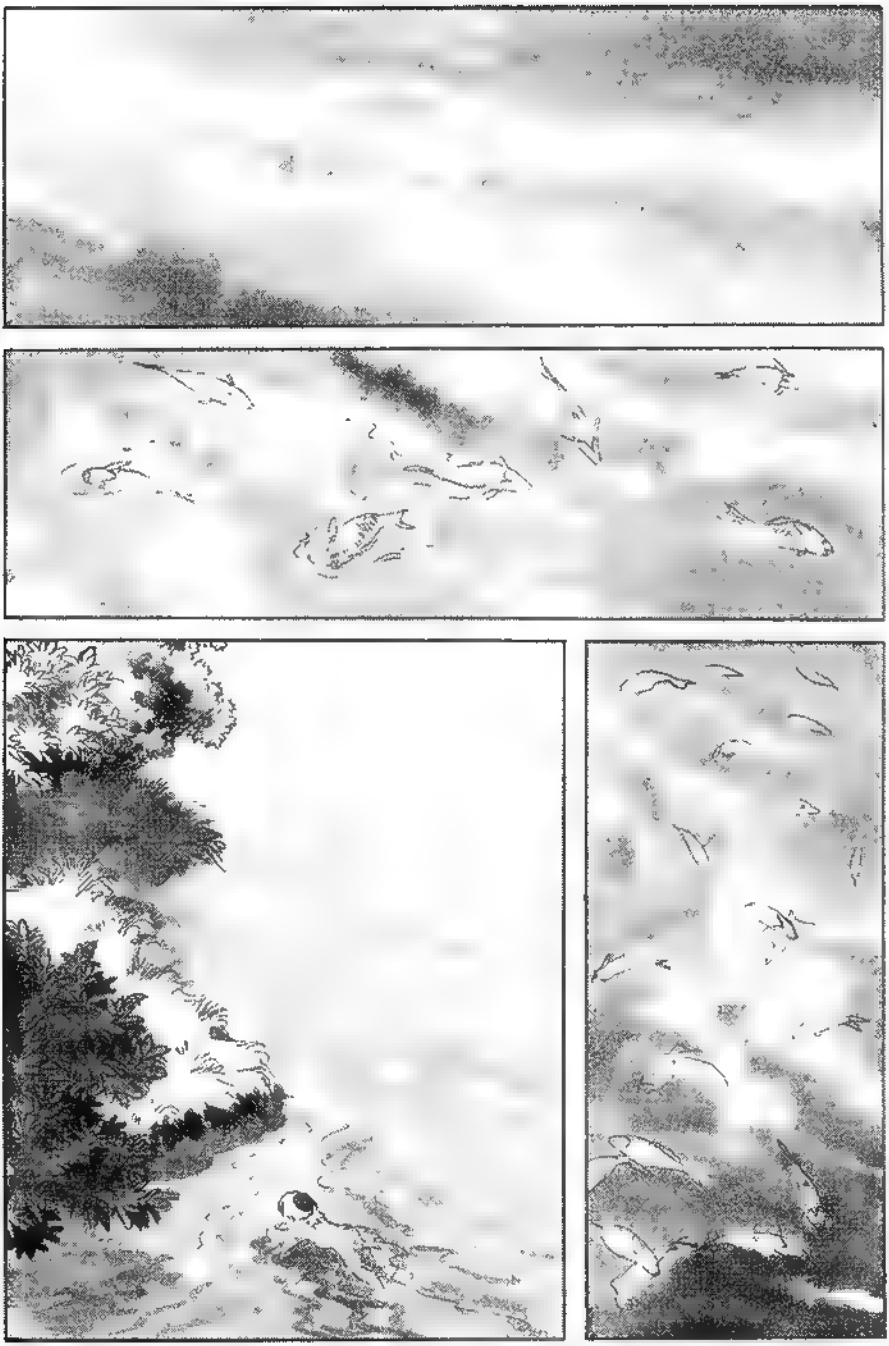


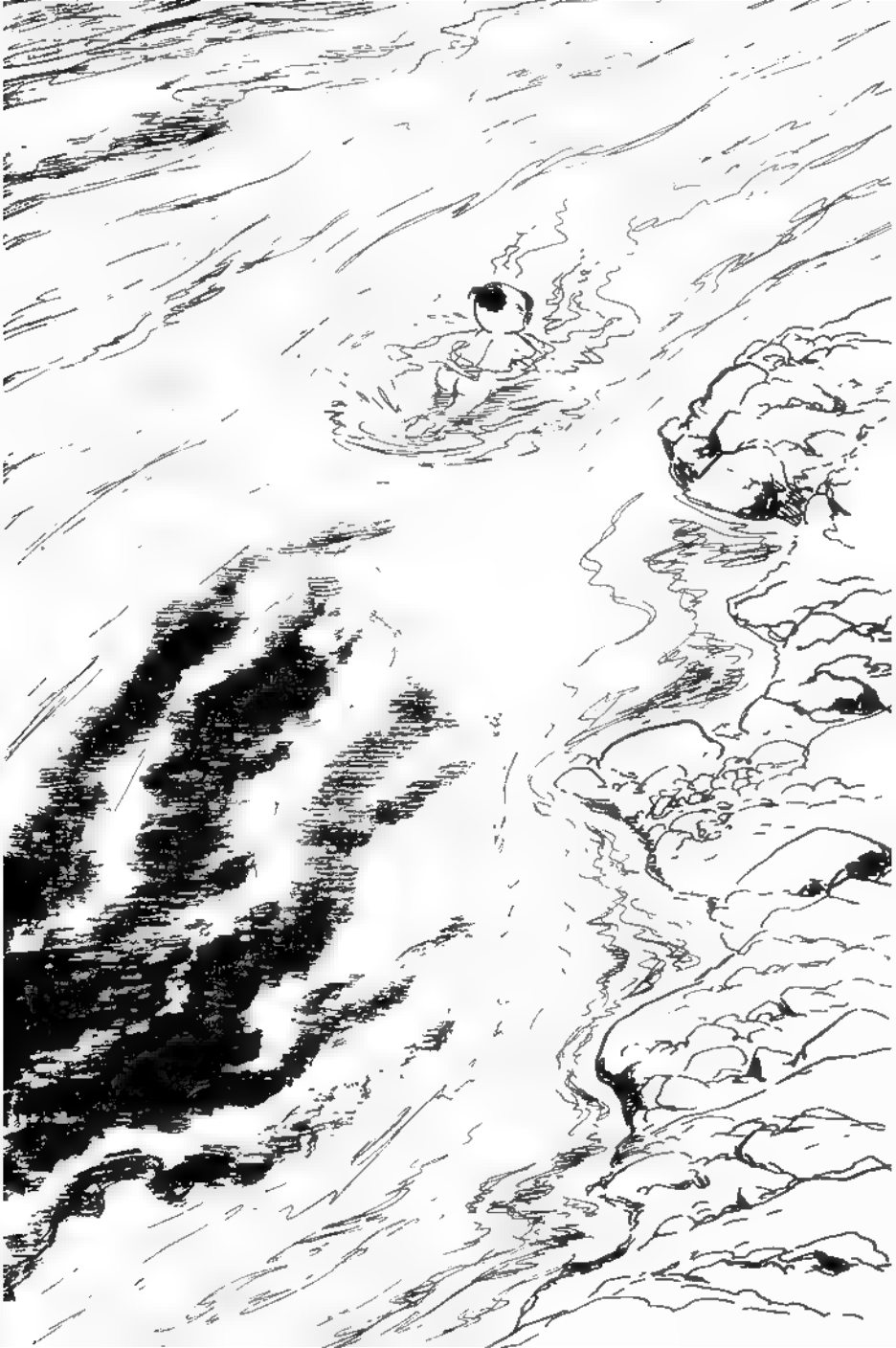




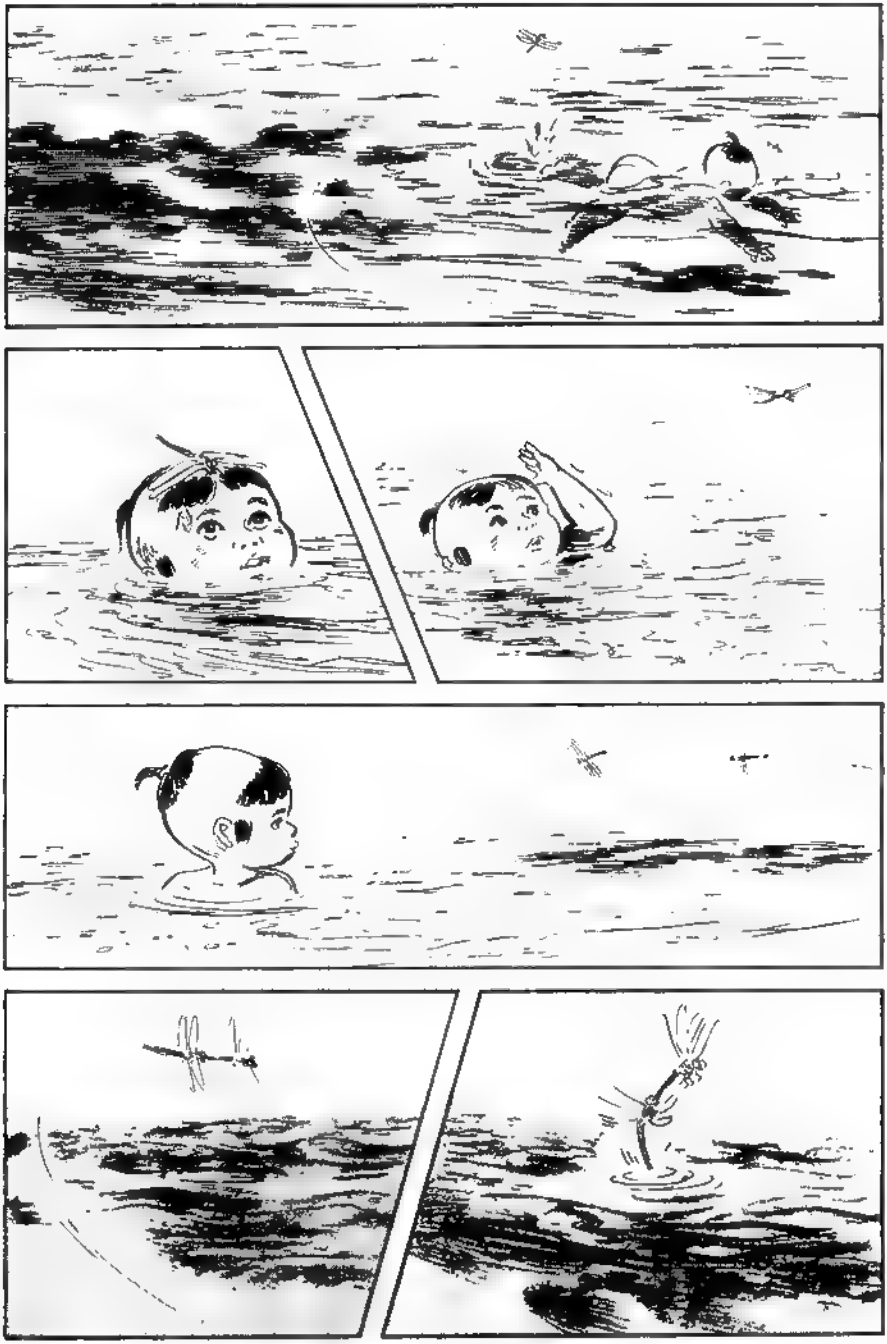


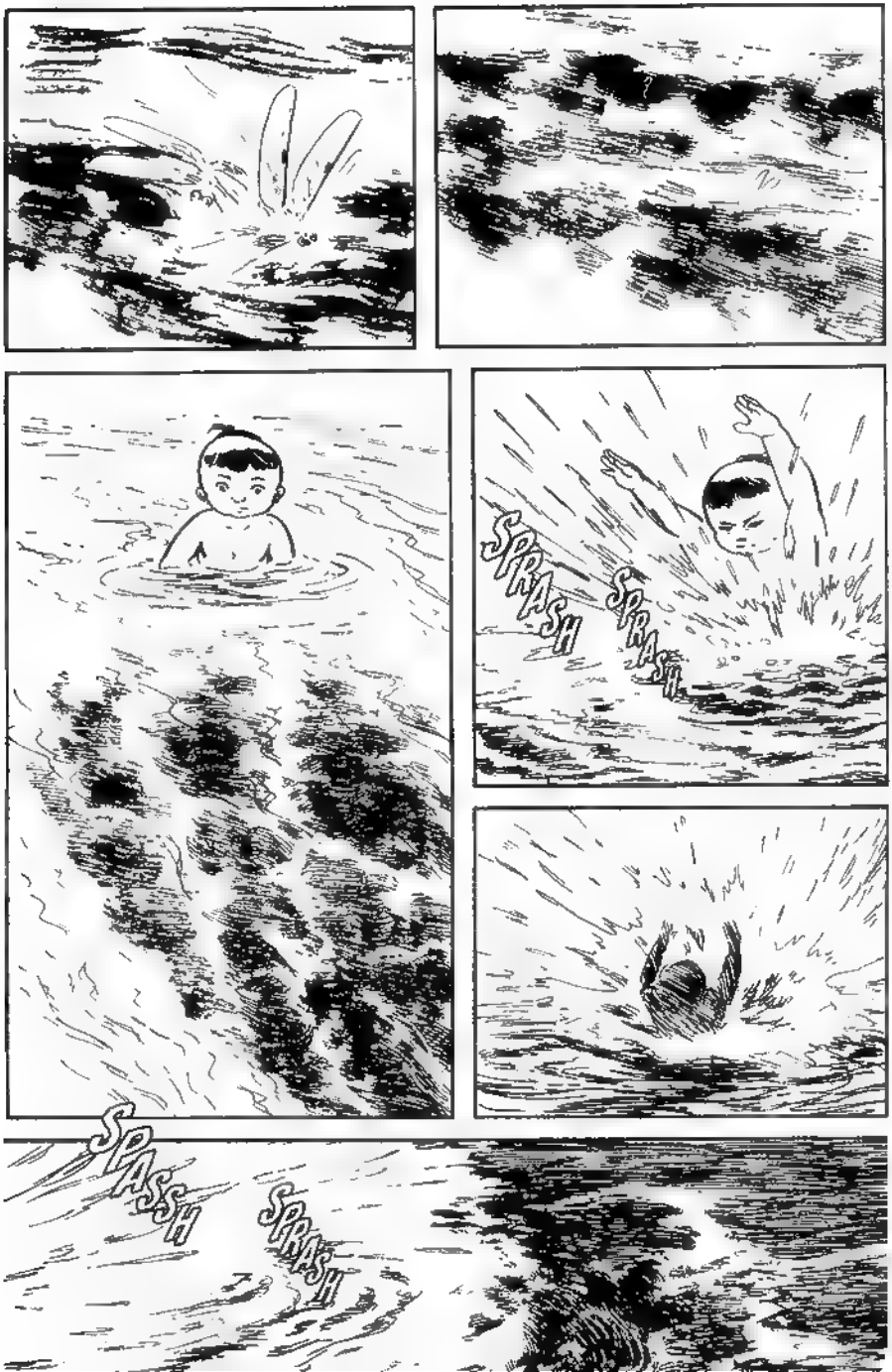




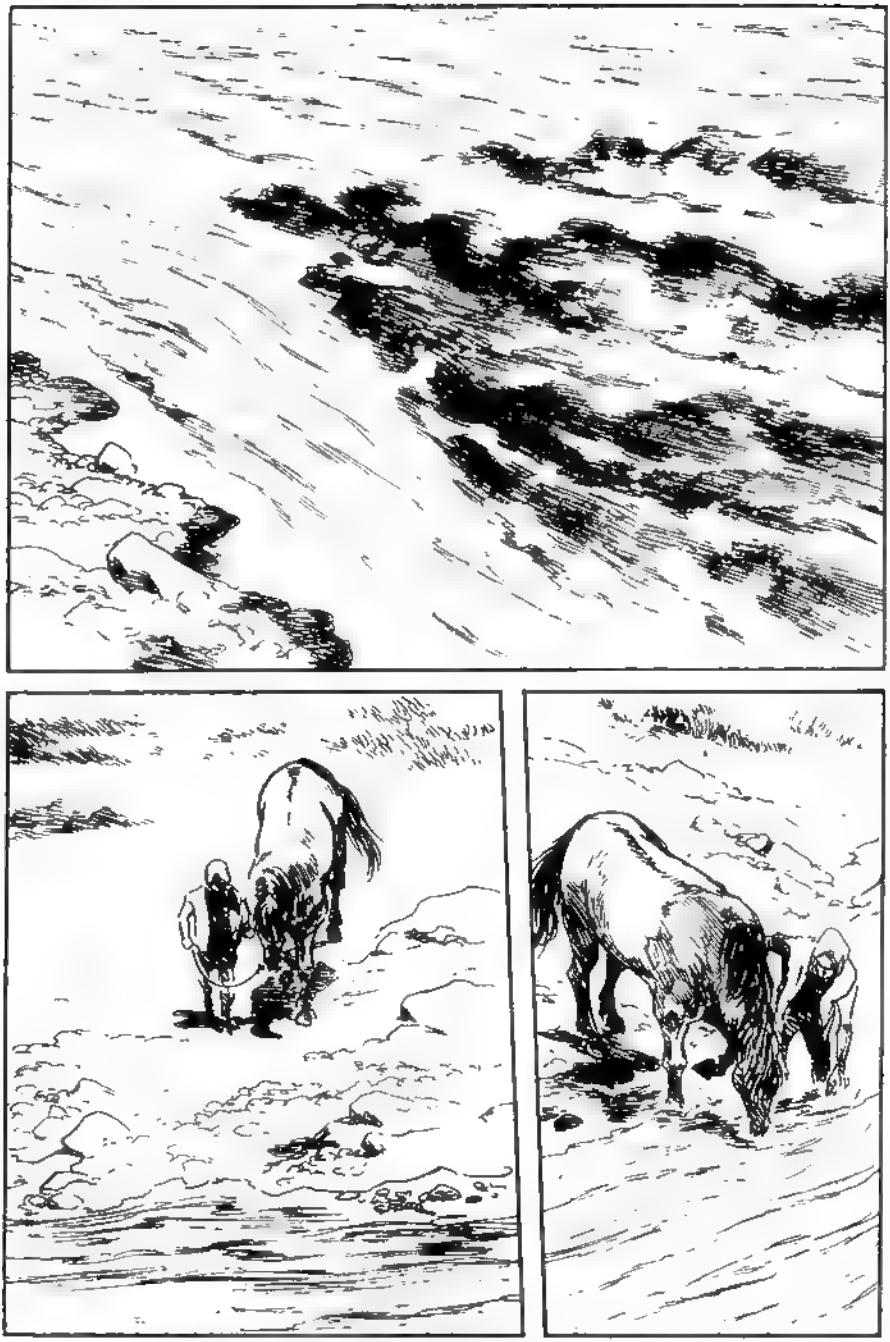


AAH, ASEBI!
A LOVELY POISON.
DISSOLVE IT IN WATER,
AND IT SPREADS
A HUNDRED
TIMES OVER.
ONE TOUCH
AND IT'S OVER!
DON'T GO NEAR
THE WATER. .
BWE HEH HEH!




SPRASH
SPRASH
SPRASH
SPRASH

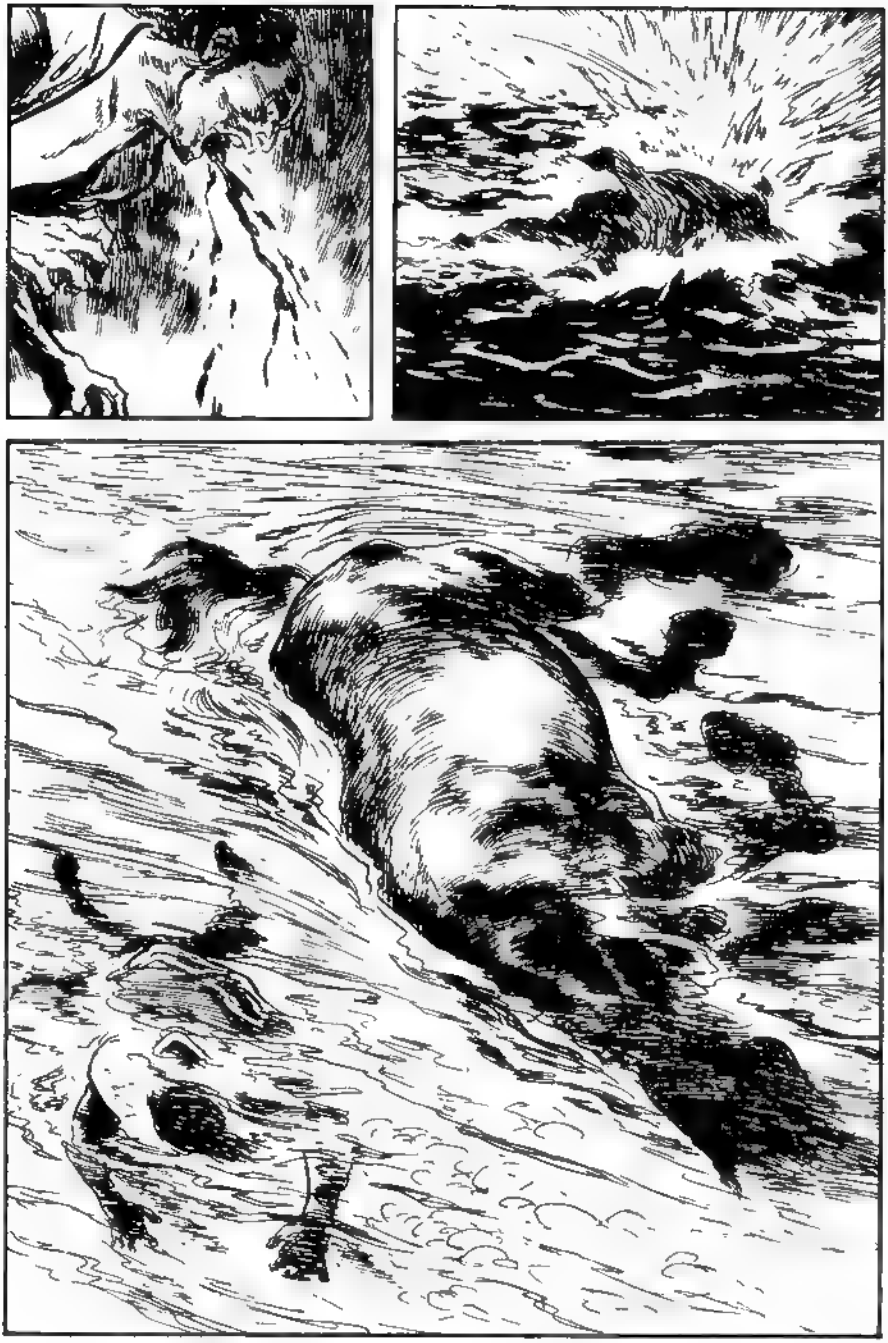
DAMN! SEEMS IT'S TRUE—
—THE GODS SMILE ON FOOLS AND CHILDREN.



HRRRRFF!

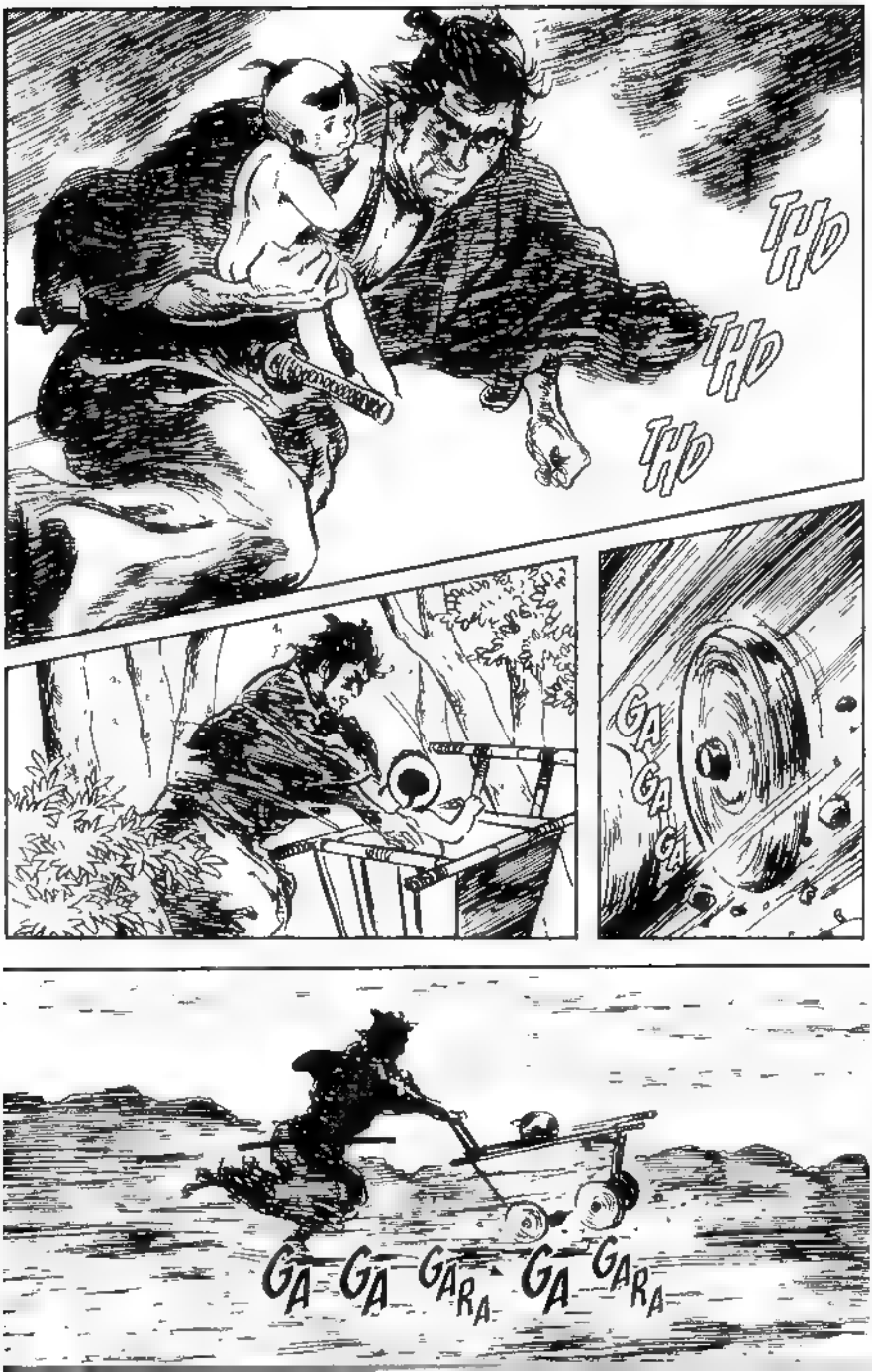
BRUUHEEE!
KBLOOSH

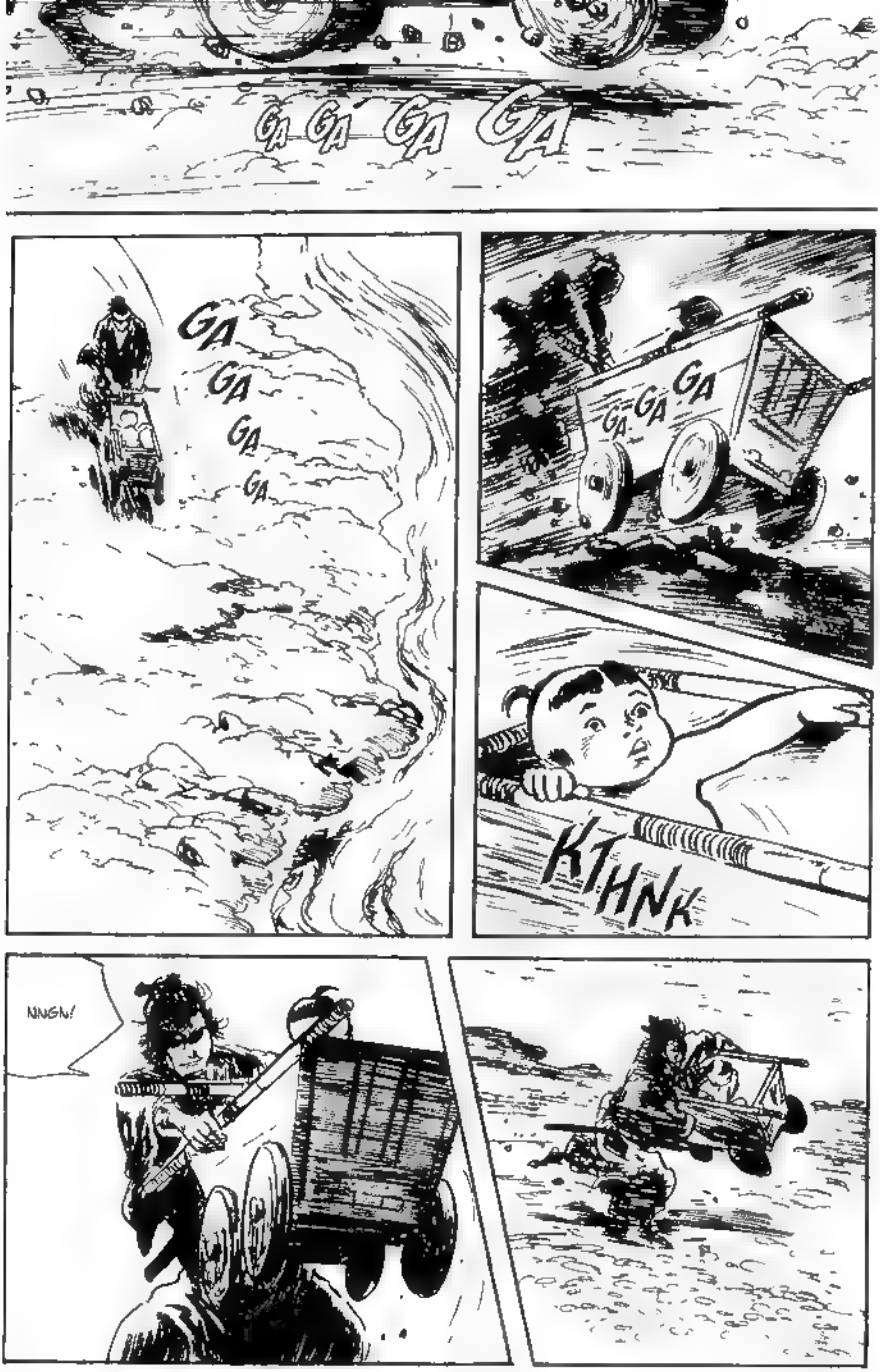
SPLRSSH
HRRK!
SSSS
GLUHF!



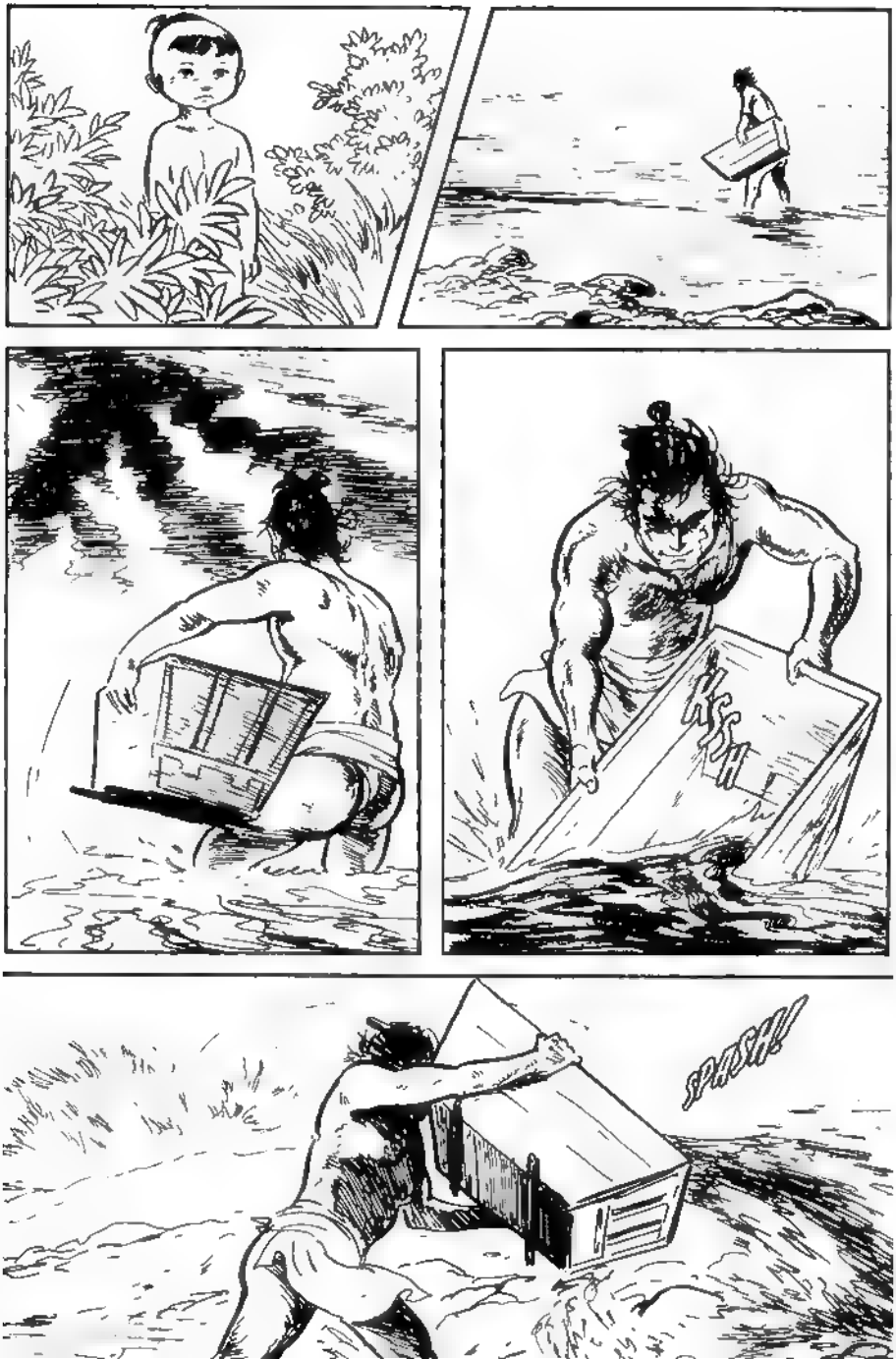
NOT EVEN RETSUDŌ IS *THIS* EVIL.
ONLY A *MONSTER* WOULD POISON A RIVER AND KILL PERHAPS *THOUSANDS* OF INNOCENTS TO GET ONE MAN!
HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL DIE DOWNSTREAM..? AND THOSE *MARIBISHI* IN THE NIGHT. *ANYONE* COULD HAVE WALKED THERE.

UNTIL NOW WE'VE FOUGHT *MEN*, WITH HUMAN *HEARTS*! BUT *THIS* MAN WALKS THE *WAY OF THE BEAST*, IN HUMAN FORM.
HE SCOFFS AT *BUSHIDŌ* AND THE WAY OF THE SWORD.
BUT WHO *IS* HE?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S ONE OF ABE GENMOTSU'S *KUCHIYAKU*...
BUT HE *KNOWS* POISON, AND *USES* IT


THD
THD
THD
GA GA GA
GA GA GARA GA GARA


GA GA GA GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
KTHNK
NNGN!

DAIGORO! STAY BACK!
SHAK
KCHAK


SPLASH!

SPSSH
SPSSH
KSSH
SPASH!

SPSSH
SPSSH
SPSSH
SLRRSH

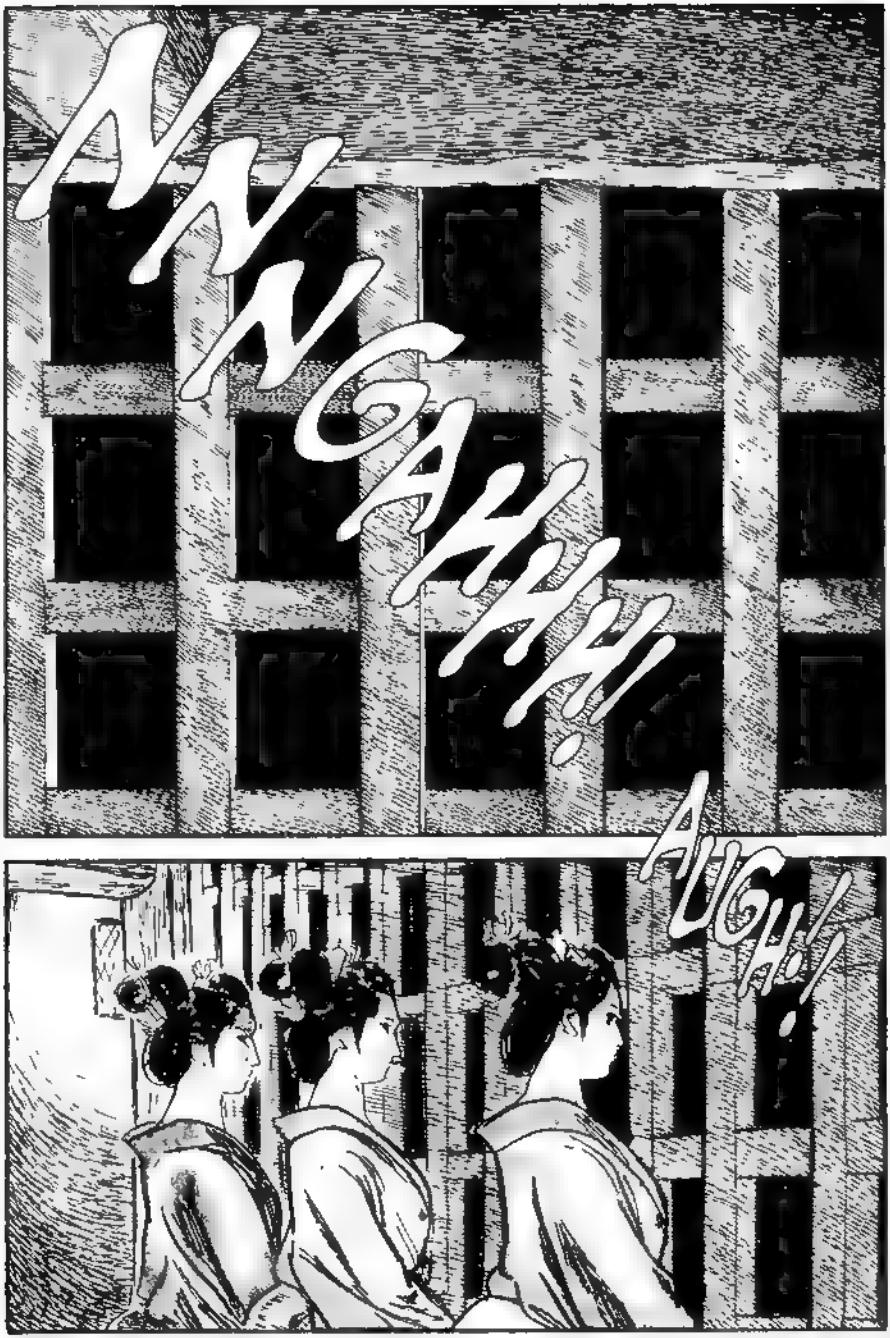
G-GOZEN-SAMA! WE. WE FAILED AGAIN.
NOT SO! WE FOUND THE WOLF'S WEAKNESS--
--HE REFUSES TO SACRIFICE OTHERS ON HIS QUEST!
LOOK AT HIM FLAIL.

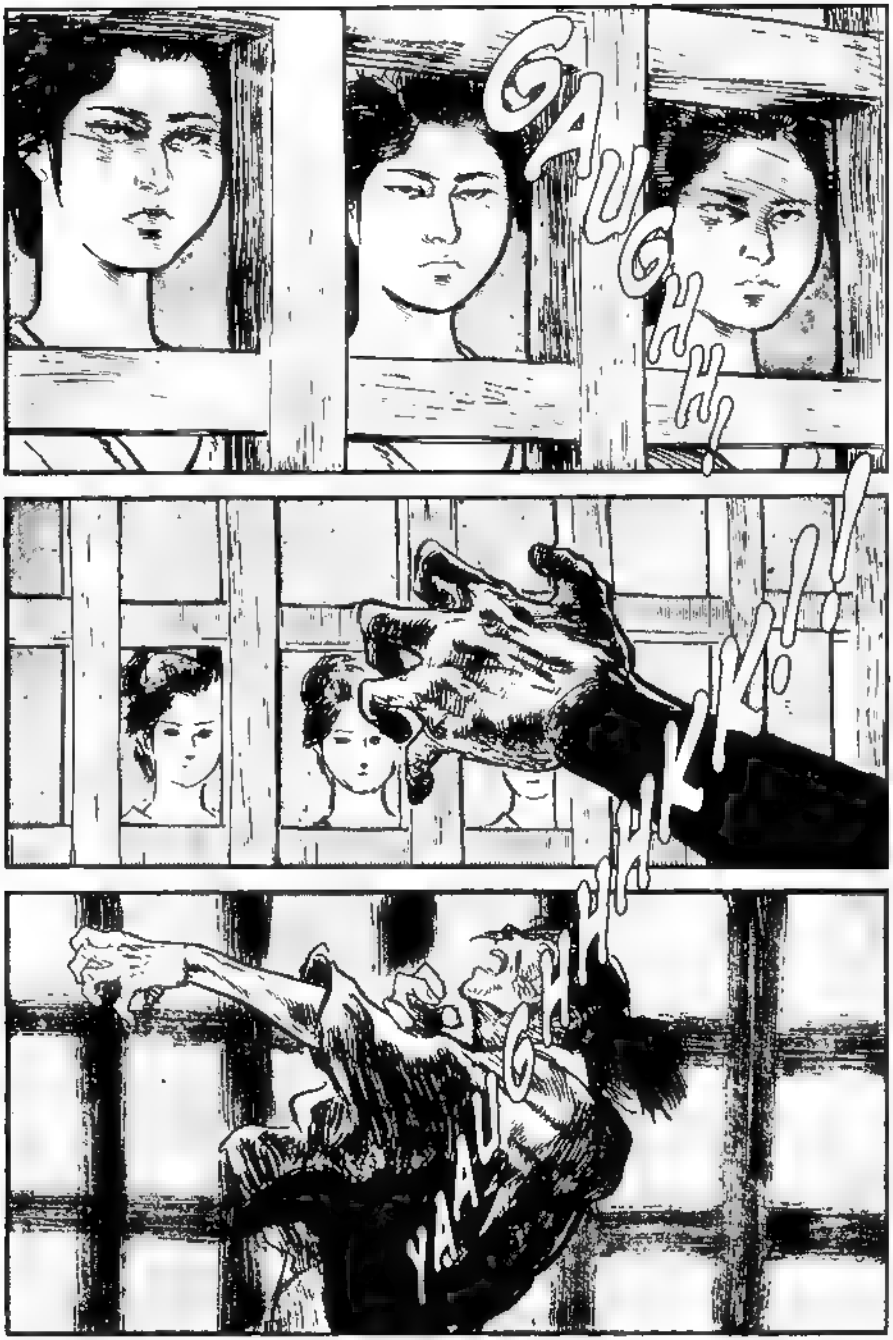
HRMPH. I THOUGHT YOU WERE A BEAST— A WOLF! BUT MY MISTAKE.
AND IF YOU'RE HUMAN, HEH HEH, HOW MUCH EASIER YOU SHALL BE TO BURY.

SKREE

BI
HM

AUUGHH!


NNGAHH
AUGH!

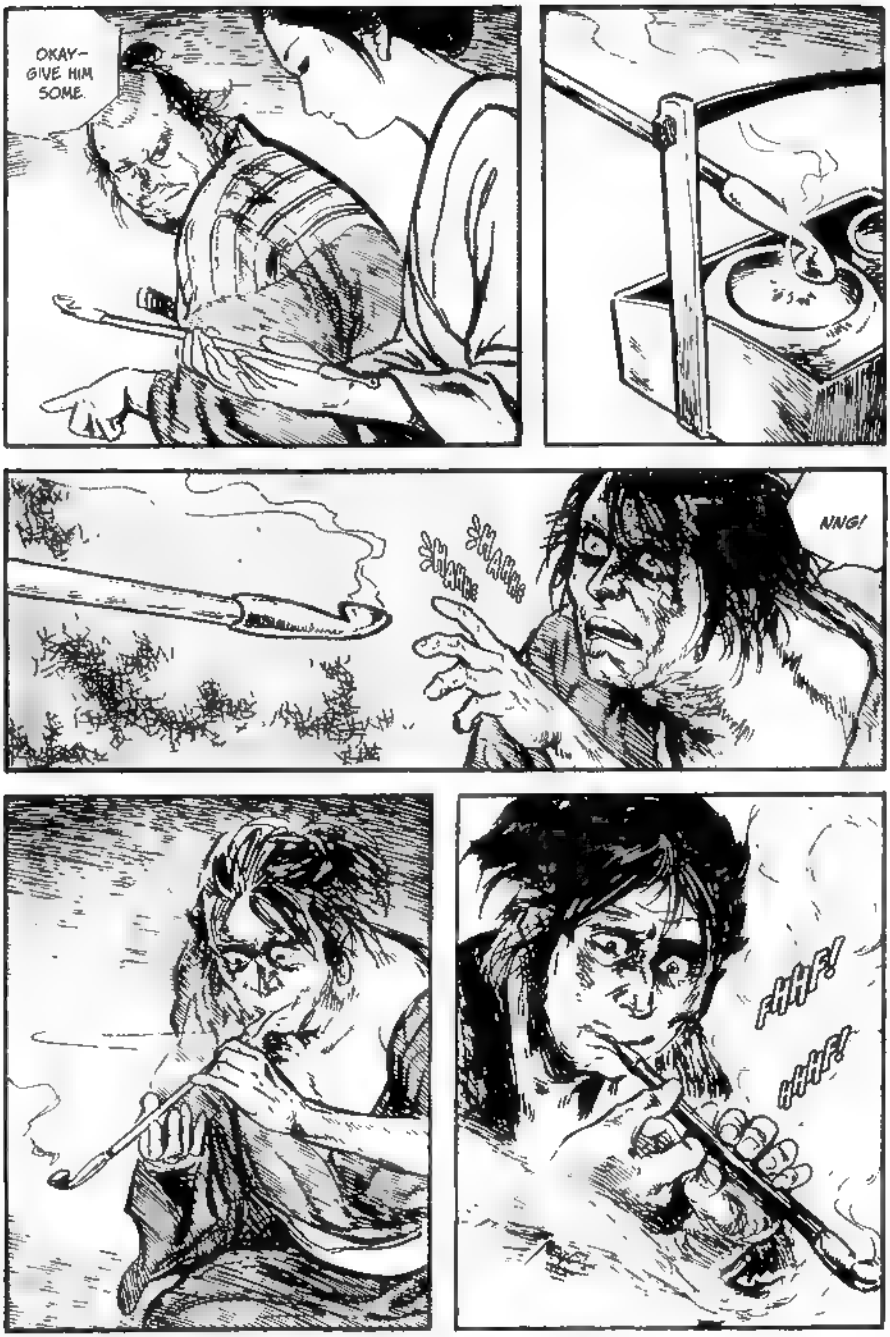

GAUGHH
HHKK!!
YAAUGH

HRGH.
. . . .
KIZAMI!
GIVE ME
KIZAMI!!!!
NNGH..!
AUGHH!!
GRRRGH

UNGH!
GHH
AAAA!
AAGY
P-PLEASE! GIVE IT TO ME!!
KIZAMI!!
OR. OR I'LL DIE!! I'LL DIIIE!!
AGGH! AUGH!!

WELL..?
THE SIXTH WITHDRAWAL PHASE.
AA AHHNN!
BWEK KEH HEH!
A SHINOBI, TRAINED TO TEAR OFF HIS OWN FACE WHEN CAPTURED.. BROKEN BY A PINCH OF AFUYŌ.

HEH HEH... HURTS, DOES IT?
AGGH!
KIZAMI! P-PLEASE! PLEASE!! AUHHG!!
YOU HAVE TWO WAYS TO ESCAPE THIS AGONY
BITE YOUR TONGUE OFF AND DIE... OR BETRAY THE YAGYU.
WHAT WILL IT BE. ?
NNG... KIZAMI! KIZAMI!!!!!
HEH. A SHINOBI WHO CAN'T BITE HIS TONGUE.
GWAH HA HA!!


OKAY— GIVE HIM SOME.
NNG!
PHEW!
PHEW!

YOUR NAME!
S-SUDARE JINNAI. I SERVE RETSUDŌ-SAMA...
WHAT WERE RETSUDŌ'S ORDERS?!

OBSERVE ABE-NO-KAII BATTLE THE LONE WOLF.
. AND THEN.
IF KAII KILLS THE WOLF .
WHAT THEN?!
TO KILL HIM!!
BWEH HEH HEH. .
BWAH HA HA HA!
I KNEW IT! AM I NOT BRILLIANT?!
BWA HA HA HA!
NOW LISTEN, JINNAI!

FROM NOW ON, I GIVE THE ORDERS. UNLESS YOU WANT THAT PAIN BACK!
GO, JINNAI!
I AM THE POISON. YOU ARE THE POISONED!
YOU'RE AN AFUYŌ ADDICT, STINKING OF POISON! YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE ME!

NO LONGER A SHINOBI! AN ADDICT!
UNDER-STAND?!
NOW GO, JINNAI. DON'T LET RETSUDŌ SUSPECT
REPORT TO HIM AS BEFORE. ONLY NOW, YOU SPY ON HIM... FOR ME!

JINNAI. ?
MY LORD. I MAKE MY REPORT
YES. ?
ABE-NO-KAI SEEKS TO POISON LONE WOLF AND CUB
HE'S LOCATED THEM, AND TAILS THEM WITH THE WOMAN THIEF "SILK SPIDER," AND THE YOTAKA

I SUSPECT THAT IN TIME, HE'LL SUCCEED.
KEEP WATCHING. WAIT UNTIL HE KILLS LONE WOLF
THEN STRIKE!
RETSUDŌ-SAMA...
...I'VE DONE EVERYTHING I CAN FOR YOU.

GLCCH

J-JINNAI?!
WHAT ARE YOU—
I HAVE NO *EXCUSE*...
I FELL INTO ABE-NO-KAII'S POISONED TRAP I'M AN *ADDICT*, NEVER TO BE A *SHINOBI* AGAIN

AN ADDICT?
TO AFUYŌ, MY LORD!
I MADE HIM THINK I WAS HIS AND GOT THIS FAR. . BUT NO FARTHER

ABE-NO-KAI! KNOWS YOUR *HEART*, RETSUDŌ-*SAMA!*
HE KNOWS HE'S *NEXT* TO DIE AFTER HE KILLS LONE WOLF AND CUB!
HRNG!
R-RETSUDŌ-*SAMA!* THIRTY *YEARS* I'VE SERVED THE YAGYŪ. I'M A *SHINOBI*... NEVER ONCE DID I SPEAK MY MIND
BUT AS I LEAVE THIS WORLD, THERE'S *ONE* THING I *MUST SAY!*
THEN SPEAK!
DON'T LET ABE-NO-KAI! KILL *LONE WOLF!*

THE YAGYŪ AND ŌGAMI ITTŌ ARE *BLOOD ENEMIES*. TO PURGE THIS HATRED AND SAVE THE CLAN, YOU MUST FIGHT HIM *YOURSELF!*
PEOPLE WILL WHISPER THROUGHOUT JAPAN, "THE WARRIOR YAGYŪ USED A *POISONER* TO DEFEAT LONE WOLF!" YOU'LL BE A *LAUGHING STOCK!*
WILL YOUR CHILDREN— KURANDO, HYŌGO, GUNBEI, AND SAYAKA-*SAMA*— REJOICE IN THEIR GRAVES? THEIR LIVES LOST IN PURSUIT OF THIS SHAMEFUL END?
RETSUDŌ-*SAMA!* KILL ITTŌ *YOURSELF!*

ABE-NO-KAII IS NO SAMURAI! HE'LL STOP AT NOTHING FOR POWER HE'S A BEAST, DEVOID OF SHIDŌ!
SEE HOW HE THOUGHT HE COULD TURN ME WITH AFUYŌ
NO BUSHI, NO SHINOBI, WOULD SURRENDER TO AFUYŌ... BUT HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND! DON'T LET SUCH A BEAST KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
ITTŌ'S A BUSHI AMONG BUSHI! LIKE THE YAGYŪ!
HE HAS THE YAGYŪ LETTER, YET HE DOESN'T USE IT. BECAUSE HE'S A MAN OF HONOR!
RETSUDŌ-SAMA...! RECONSIDER!

FORGIVE ME, JINKAI. YOU SPOKE THE TRUTH. I WAS ABOUT TO HEAP SHAME UPON SHAME.
YES. I SHALL KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
BUT NOW. BEFORE THAT ABE-NO-KAI!!

HEH HEH. SO MUCH FOR THE FAGIN AND NOW THE CLIMAX!
IT'S TIME TO BURY LONE WOLF AND CUB, ONCE AND FOR ALL!
BWAH HEH HEH! BWAHH HAH HAH HAH!

LONE WOLF AND CUB IN "A TASTE OF THE BLADE"
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

afuyō
A type of opiate drug.

anko
Sweet red bean paste.

asebi
Pieris japonica. Japanese andromeda, a broad-leaved evergreen shrub. Andromedotoxins (grayanotoxins) are water-soluble diterpenoid compounds. Leaves and flower nectar are sources of the toxin.

bakkaku
The government. The shogun, his councilors, and his senior officials

buke
A samurai household.

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

bushidō
The way of the warrior Also known as *shidō*.

cho
Approximately 300 meters

daikan
An official who collected taxes owed to Edo and oversaw public works, agriculture, and other projects administered by the central government.

daikansho
The office of the *daikan*

daimyō
A feudal lord

dokumi
Poison taster.

Edo
The capital of medieval Japan and the seat of the shōgunate. The site of modern-day Tokyo.

Fudai daimyō
The inner circle of clans pledging allegiance to the Tokugawa. The Fudai clans were Tokugawa allies even before Tokugawa Ieyasu's decisive victory of Sekigahara that launched the Tokugawa shogunate.

go-kashi
Cakes and candy The "*go-*" is an honorific because the cakes come from the shōgun. There are several categories of *wagashi* (Japanese sweetcakes): *Manju* have sweet paste from *azuki* red beans, wrapped in a soft flour shell. *Mochi* are made from pounded rice, often with sweet paste inside *Yōkan* is a semi-hardened, sweet jelly. There are hundreds of kinds of *wagashi*, often unique to the towns where they are made.

han
A feudal domain

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*
chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sama – used for superiors
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

jiji
Old man. Grandfather. Both intimate...and condescending.

jikisan hatamoto
Daimyō directly serving the shōgun, with the right to meet him face to face. Their title, "standard bearers," came from history, when the warriors who would be promoted in peacetime to *hatamoto* had been the most trusted allies of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa shogun.

jitte
A specialized weapon carried by street cops. About 18 inches long, with no cutting edge — just two prongs designed to catch and snap off an opponent's sword blade.

kajō
Good fortune. June 16 was a popular folk festival long before Ieyasu's narrow escape. In its original incarnation, sixteen sweetcakes were offered to the gods to ward off disease, and eaten afterwards.

kizami
Tobacco was extremely expensive in early Japan, and the preferred form was finely shredded, hair-like *kizami*, rolled into tiny balls and smoked by inhaling deeply in a few quick puffs.

koku
A bale of rice. The traditional measure of a *han*'s wealth, a measure of its agricultural land and productivity.

kōtai yoriai
Retainers of *hatamoto daimyō* based in Edo for their lords' visits to the capital.

kusasugikazura
Asparagus cochinchinensis

machi-bugyō
The Edo city commissioner, combining the post of mayor and chief of police. A post held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners; samurai in Edo were controlled by their own *daimyo* and his officers. The *machi-bugyō* had an administrative staff and a small force of armed policemen at his disposal.

makibishi
Caltrops. A traditional ninja weapon, designed to always leave a point up. Intended to slow down pursuers.

omote-kōke
Untitled shogunal liaison officers in charge of protocol and relations with the imperial court in Kyōto.

rōnin
A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

sankyo sanke
The three sub-branches of the Tokugawa clan. When there was no heir to the main Tokugawa line, one would be picked from two of these clans, while the *fuku*-shōgun (Vice-shōgun) always came from the third.

shinobi
A generic term for ninja, meaning "one who moves in secrecy." Ninja had their heyday in the time of warring states before the rise of the Tokugawa clan. Originally mercenaries serving different warlords, by the Edo period they were in the service of the central government. The most famous *shinobi* were the ninja of Iga and Kaga, north of Kyoto. The Kurokuwa that appear in *Lone Wolf and Cub* were officially the laborers and manual workers in Edo Castle. Whether they truly served as a secret spy corps is lost in history.

shoyaku
The other titled posts in the shogunate.

takenigusa
Macleaya cordata

Tōshōgū
Tokugawa Ieyasu.

Tozama daimyō
Daimyō who rallied to the Tokugawa side only after the Tokugawa victory at Sekigahara.

vet
To examine or appraise expertly.

yakuza
Japan's criminal syndicates. In the Edo period, *yakuza* were a common part of the landscape, running houses of gambling and prostitution. As long as they did not overstep their bounds, they were tolerated by the authorities, a tradition little changed in modern Japan.

yotaka
Literally, "nighthawk." Streetwalkers, among the lowest ranks of Edo period prostitutes.

yuzuri
Daphniphyllum macropodum

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine, produced movies, written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami)* in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

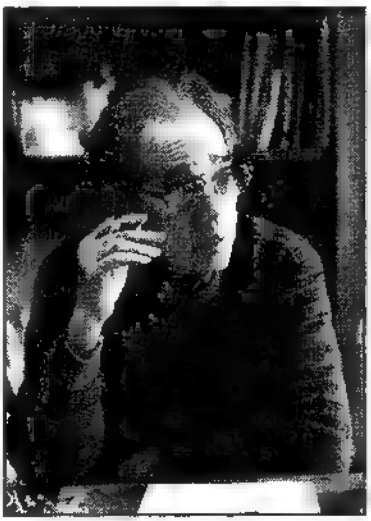
In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the "golden duo" and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



THE RONIN REPORT

By David S. Hofhine

An Authentic Example of a Dotanuki School Sword: part one

For the last several years, I have been working full time as a professional *togishi* (Japanese sword polisher) and have recently had the rare pleasure and honor of working on an authentic Dotanuki school *katana*. This is the same Dotanuki school of sword-smithery that is often mentioned in the *Lone Wolf and Cub* series, and which allegedly produced the *katana* sword that was used by Itto Ogami. Hence, this article is something of a sequel to the essay originally presented in *Lone Wolf and Cub* volume twelve entitled "The Dotanuki Sword of Lone Wolf and Cub."

To give a complete description of this particular sword and its unique Higo school mountings, it will be necessary to give a short overview on the subject of Japanese sword-smithery and what goes into a Japanese *koshirae* (sword mounting). Japanese swords present a very deep field of study. There are many top universities in Japan that offer advanced post-graduate degrees in sword study, and within this field has grown an enormous vocabulary of terms to describe how certain features of a blade look. Terms such as "wind-blown sand" and "moonlight reflecting on still water" are two examples of the descriptive terms used. There are, in fact, entire books devoted to defining the hundreds of terms used by sword aficionados. I will be using primarily English equivalents to facilitate understanding by the occidental reader, but will also include basic Japanese terms as needed to describe this sword and its features as accurately as possible.

Forging a good sword is difficult. To maintain a good cutting ability and to stand up to heavy use, the cutting edge must be very hard. In addition to having a hard edge, the blade must also be so tough it will not easily break. Finally, a blade must be rigid, yet resistant to bending, and if bent should spring back into shape to a reasonable degree.

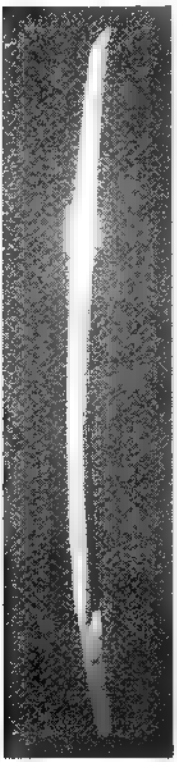


fig. 1

These characteristics are not necessarily compatible, and therein lies the problem. For example, as steel is made to be harder, it also becomes more brittle. Many different steps must be taken while forging a blade to arrive at a balance that holds all of the best characteristics of a finished sword and fewest of the worst. Each step in the forging process has an effect on the overall appearance and functionality of the finished blade. Ancient Japanese swordsmiths made numerous ingenious innovations to solve these problems, resulting in the Japanese sword's famous attributes as a weapon and its unique physical characteristics.

The Dotanuki described in this article would be defined as a *katana*, that is, the classical "samurai sword" with a single edged, curved blade, usually about 25" to 29" long (fig. 1). Traditionally, a *katana* is also defined by a ridge, called a *shinogi*, which runs the full length of the blade, separating the bevel of the lower surface from the flat part of the upper surface. This particular *katana* has a blade length of 26 3/8", measured from the tip of the point to the notch where the blade ends and the tang begins, and is very similar to the *katana* depicted throughout *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

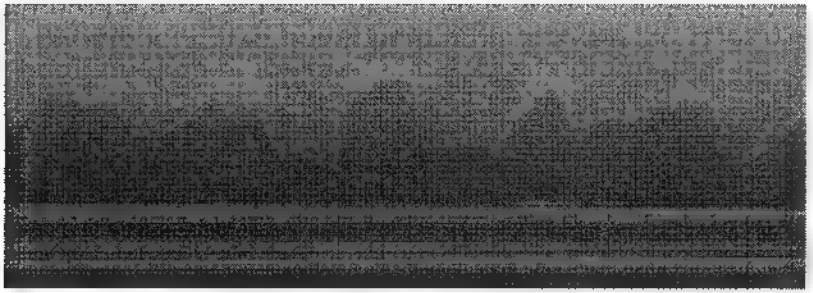


Fig. 2

sword, is the tempering pattern, or *hamon*, that runs along the cutting edge of the blade (fig. 2). The edge of a Japanese sword is hardened in a process called *yaki-ire*. First, the body and back edge of the blade are covered in a clay mixture to partially insulate it from heat. Then the exposed edge is hardened by heating it to a great temperature followed by a quick cooling in water. This process leaves a pattern along the cutting edge of the blade that is the hallmark of a traditionally forged Japanese blade.

The hardened edge is actually a type of crystalline steel known to modern science as *martensite*, and is the same sort of steel that modern razor blades are made of. It is about as hard as steel can get, but unfortunately it is brittle and will crack and chip rather then bend or dent. The body of the blade, having been protected by the clay insulator, remains a softer and more flexible type of steel known as *pearlite*. The shape of the *hamon* is formed by the boundary where the *martensite* meets the *pearlite*. This combination of a tough flexible body and an extremely hardened edge is one of the keys to the Japanese sword's extraordinary cutting ability.

Bringing out the details of the *hamon* is a primary goal of the sword polisher. There are two styles of finish for the temper line, *sashikomi* and *keisho*. *Sashikomi* is a natural finish that lets the shape of the temper line stand out on its own with little enhancement. *Keisho* finish, on the other hand, uses little slips of fine polishing stone

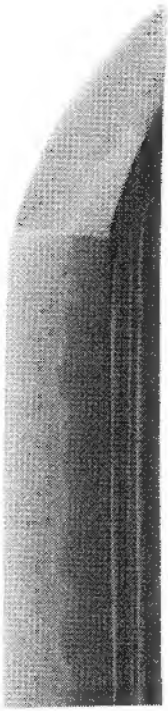


Fig. 3

to whiten all of the area around the actual temper line. Of the two, *keisho* is by far the more common style finish used in Japan today.

I finished this blade's *hamon* in a *sashikomi* or natural style, which I judged to be the best finish option for this particular sword, resulting in the *hamon* having many high narrow peaks that reach almost to the ridgeline. If a *keisho* style finish had been chosen, much of the grain pattern detail between the peaks of the *hamon* would have been lost. In fact, the majority of the lower surface of the blade would have been whitened, as well. This blade's owner has a preference for *sashikomi* style finish, whenever possible.

This particular sword has what could be considered an aggressive *hamon* pattern. In contrast to the placid straight line, wave, and lobe patterns often found on Japanese swords, this blade has a stark pattern consisting of a series of jagged peaks, and the great width of the *hamon* suggests that it was a sword meant for extensive use in battle. When a blade of this type is used in actual combat, the edge will sometimes become chipped from striking armor, other weapons, or bone. A wide *hamon* allows the chips to be polished out of the edge without losing much of the hard steel and destroying the blade's useful cutting ability.

The portion of the *hamon* that wraps around the point is called the *boshi* (fig. 3). This is one of the most important features of the blade and is considered the "face" of the sword, and is by far the most difficult part of the sword to correctly polish. It takes great skill and special tools, such as the wooden spring jig, called a *narume-dai*, to properly bring out the subtle features of the *boshi*.

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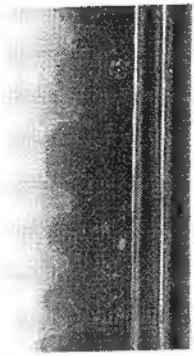
Fig. 4

Another eye-catching feature of any good Japanese sword is the beautiful grain pattern. This is very hard to photograph and reproduce in print, but is somewhat visible in figure four. This pattern is a result of the unique forging process. Construction begins with a core of softer iron, which is very tough and is much easier to produce than the fine, high carbon skin steel. It is resistant to breaking, although by itself it is not very rigid or hard. Around this core is wrapped the fine skin steel, or *ji-gane*, which has been forged and folded over many times to remove impurities and establish a uniform consistency. This folding process also results in the formation of an internal grain structure which, when expertly polished, presents a beautiful surface pattern called *ji-hada*. The many layers of the skin steel give lateral stability and make the blade more rigid and resistant to bending.

The upper surface of this blade is adorned with an engraving, or *horimono*. In this case, it is a simple, yet well executed set of parallel grooves, or *hi*, running the entire length of the blade. These grooves increase the overall aesthetic beauty of the blade, but this is not their primary function. They are often referred to as "blood grooves" by westerners, yet this is a misnomer. The primary purpose of these grooves is to reduce the weight of the blade, thereby making it faster. A secondary effect is an increase in rigidity. This is a matter of structural physics — it's is the same principle whereby a steel "I" beam is more rigid than a beam of the same length and weight with a square cross section.

(to be continued in *LWJC* #21)

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